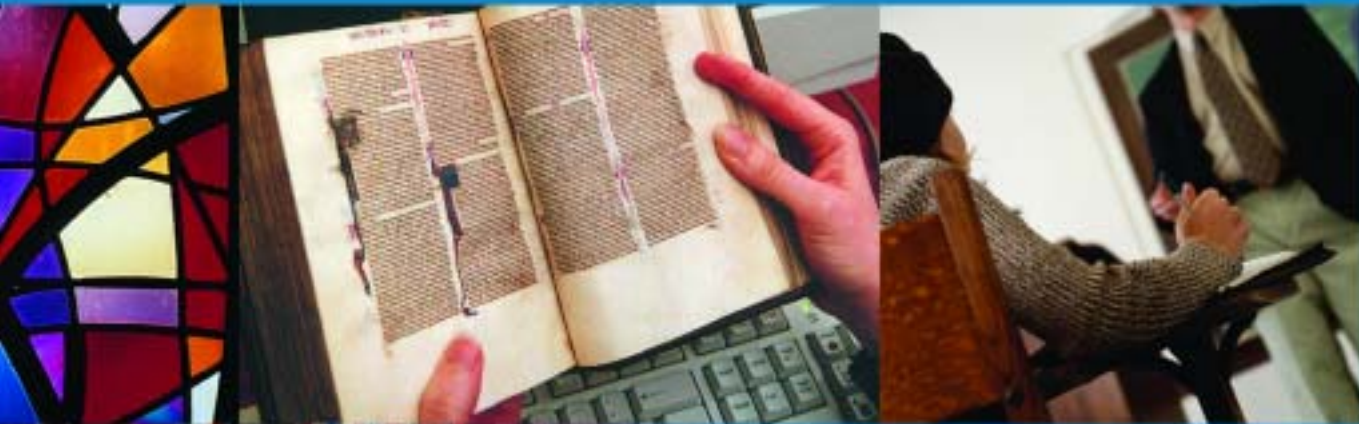




**Mater Dei Institute of Education**  
A College of Dublin City University



## Strategic Plan 2003-2008



Religion, Education and the Arts:  
Teaching and Learning in a Changing Ireland





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**Strategic Plan**  
**2003-2008**

Religion, Education and the Arts:  
Teaching and Learning in a Changing Ireland





## Foreword

On behalf of the Governing Board, the staff, students, and graduates I have pleasure in introducing our Strategic Plan *Religion, Education and the Arts: Teaching and Learning in a Changing Ireland: 2003-2008*.

Mater Dei Institute of Education was founded in 1966 and in 1999 it became a College of Dublin City University. For some 35 years the Institute has provided teachers for post-primary schools and during that time its graduates have made a very significant contribution to education and public life in Ireland.

The Institute is distinctive in its adoption of the concurrent model of Teacher Education for second-level schools, in its new BA in Irish Studies and Religious Studies, in its postgraduate Pastoral care and Chaplaincy programmes, and in its other postgraduate degrees up to Ph.D. A further hallmark of the Institute's programmes is its interdisciplinary approach to the study of Religion, Education and the Humanities.

Because of the many changes taking place in Higher Education the Institute has arrived at a crossroads along with the Universities, the Institutes of Technology, and other Colleges of Education. In this new context the Institute has, after much consultation, drawn up a Strategic Plan. This is our "road map" for the next five years; it seeks to address the educational, social and cultural changes taking place in Ireland at this time and to offer a way forward for the Institute as a College of Education within the University sector.

### **Dermot A. Lane**

*President*

## Mission Statement

Mater Dei Institute of Education is committed to:

- *the highest professional standards in Teacher Education and Pastoral Care;*
- *innovative research in the areas of Religion, Education and the Humanities;*
- *broadening access to third level and continuing education;*
- *a Christian vision that is ecumenically alive and respectful of other religious traditions.*



## Future Direction

*“Living in an era of extraordinary social, political, cultural and economic change, there are new challenges facing Ireland, especially for those who are privileged to work in Higher Education”.*

In early 2002, the Board of Mater Dei Institute of Education (MDI) decided to embark on a strategic planning process. The Board believed that it was timely to undertake such an activity in order to respond to the changes that are taking place in the educational landscape, and also to respond to the changing needs of stakeholders.

As a College of Dublin City University, MDI subscribes enthusiastically to the strategic themes of the DCU Strategic Plan 2001-2005: *Leading Change*. This document reflects many of the values and academic focuses that the Institute wishes to promote. In particular the Institute will seek to support the strategic themes of Communications, Arts and Culture; Education and Learning; and Social Development and World Order.

The focus by DCU on ethical issues, culture and education in a changing society are also embodied in the life and work of the Institute. Such issues will continue to play a vital role in the future of the Institute. Through its formal link with the University, MDI seeks to contribute to and support the goal of DCU, that of continuing to be an innovative and exciting University.

This strategic plan is the outcome of an extensive planning process involving consultation with staff, students, graduates, second-level schools and external stakeholders of the Institute.

## Introduction

MDI has a clear sense of identity. This identity defines the Institute in terms of its three roles:

- ...as a College of Education
- ...as a Catholic College of Education
- ...as a Catholic College of Education within the Irish University Sector



## Defining Roles of MDI

### A College of Education

The Institute defines itself, in the first instance, as a College of Education that provides for the academic and professional needs of school personnel particularly at second level. As such it works in close harmony with its sister Colleges of Education in Ireland in furthering teacher education at pre-service and in-career levels. Of particular importance to the Institute is its relationship with St.Patrick's College, Drumcondra, which specialises in the education of teachers at primary level and which, like the Institute, is institutionally linked to Dublin City University and which is also under the patronage of the Archbishop of Dublin.

*"In this context of constant change, there is a temptation to sideline religion, to privatise faith and to marginalise morality... As an Institute of Education and a College of DCU we will resist these temptations".*

Historically the Institute began by offering teacher education programmes and qualifications for teachers of religious education and humanities subjects. From the 1990s this was broadened to include programmes and qualifications for School Chaplaincy and Pastoral Care.

The Institute is proud of its contribution to the Irish teaching profession over the past thirty-five years and is a willing partner in seeking to maintain and enhance the quality of teacher education. At a time of difficulty for the profession, both nationally and internationally, the Institute commits itself once again to value-added teacher education in terms of recruitment, professional formation, induction and in-career service of teachers. It intends to form teachers who are self-reliant, critically aware and committed to ever improving quality in both teaching and learning in second-level education in Ireland.

In its work as a College of Education the Institute is acutely aware that teaching is an ethical activity that contributes to the full development of the human person. Learning cannot be reduced to the transmission of information and the acquisition of market-related skills; it also provides a critical base from which to embark on the advancement of knowledge through innovative research and the pursuit of truth.

In the provision of its programmes as a College of Education the Institute fosters opportunity of access so as to broaden especially the socio-economic base of the teaching profession. In its research remit the Institute also addresses issues of gender equity in teacher education. In its dealing with its students the Institute is keenly aware of the dignity, equality and value of the individual human person and of the need both to respect and also to appreciate difference.

In its Teacher Education programmes the Institute will contribute at a national level to the promotion of an information and knowledge-based society while at the same time creating a strong sense of ethical responsibility and religious sensibility. The Institute seeks to develop graduates who are characterised by an understanding of their tradition, a capacity for creative thought, critical openness, rigorous intellectual inquiry, empathy and compassion, and a commitment to the work of justice, social transformation and global solidarity.



*“We will seek to emphasise the public character of religion, the prophetic side of faith and the social dimension of morality in all of our programmes of teaching and learning”*

### **A Catholic College of Education**

MDI asserts its unique position as a mediator between Irish Catholicism and Irish culture rather than simply embracing the latest trends of society, whether they are driven by the market or ideologically. MDI is an important site where Christianity can negotiate openly with a plurality of other cultures, attitudes and systems of belief and no belief, and advocates the necessity of this negotiation by inviting people of all persuasions to participate in it.

In the spirit of the Second Vatican Council MDI is committed to reading the signs of the times locally, and indeed globally, and interpreting these in the light of the gospel and the teaching of the Church. It will focus on the needs of the Irish Church in a time of changing patterns of faith and religious affiliation. In particular, it will seek to mediate religious faith to a young generation in a newly emerging secular Ireland and to foster a sense of the intellectual and affective significance of the Christian tradition among adults.

As a Catholic College of Education the Institute recognises that faith and reason are the twin sources in the ongoing search for theological “wisdom and understanding” – the motto of the Institute. Within the professional development of students the Institute will focus on the primacy of ethical and religious questions.

From an ethical point of view the Institute will take account of the social teaching of the Catholic Church by affirming a preferential option for the poor, the primacy of human rights, a critical attention to global and local justice, and a commitment to care for the integrity of creation while at the same time upholding the dignity of every person and the centrality of human solidarity.

From a religious point of view the Institute will explicitly foster inter-church, inter-faith and cross-cultural dialogue.

The Institute welcomes the introduction of the new Religious Education syllabus in second-level schools and is committed to promoting the ecumenical and cross-cultural dimensions of religious education.

### **A Catholic College of Education within the Irish University Sector**

The Linkage Agreement, which was signed with DCU in August 1999, is the basic charter from which the Institute will continue to advance. MDI welcomes the emphasis given by DCU in *Leading Change: Strategic Plan 2001-2005*, to the creation of ethical awareness throughout its activities. The Institute will collaborate with the University in the development of this particular emphasis.

As a Catholic College of Education within the Irish University sector, MDI will seek to strengthen existing relationships. This applies in particular to the University and St. Patrick’s College, Drumcondra. In addition, the Institute aims to foster closer links with local communities in the north inner city of Dublin. Further, the Institute will seek to support the *Good Friday Peace Agreement* through its new Irish Studies Programme and the development of its existing link with Edgehill Theological College in Belfast.



The Institute recognises the academic freedom of scholars, in accordance with the principles and proper methods of each discipline. MDI is also seriously committed to a quality review system in collaboration with the University.

The Institute promotes a policy of equality and respect among all staff and students.



*Interreligious Group at the launch of resources for the new Junior Certificate in Religious Education.*

## MDI Strategy

This strategic plan is the product of an extensive planning process involving consultation with staff, students, graduates, second-level schools and external stakeholders of MDI.

The planning process was managed by a staff taskforce which was appointed by the Board of the Institute. Alongside the importance of staffing, three principal areas of future development of MDI were identified in the course of the consultative process:

### Undergraduate

Upon evaluation of the Institute's current role, it was clear that the future of MDI was inextricably linked to the undergraduate programmes the Institute currently offers. The Institute offers two distinct degrees and contributes to another programme in Belfast (in conjunction with Edgehill Theological College):

- 1 *Bachelor of Religious Education*, which has three separate entry streams.
- 2 *Bachelor of Arts in Irish Studies and Religious Studies*, a new programme that was introduced in 2002.
- 3 *Bachelor of Theology*, taught jointly in Belfast with Edgehill Theological College (Methodist). It is a unique undertaking on the island of Ireland where two colleges have come together on a cross-community and cross-border basis to provide a taught undergraduate programme.

Looking to the future, MDI will seek to maintain undergraduate numbers by retaining and supporting the courses that are currently on offer.



## Postgraduate/Adult Education

The future will be about expanding the postgraduate focus of MDI to include Adult Education – while still offering the possibility of accreditation for all courses. A key action will be maintaining, and depending on opportunity, expanding postgraduate numbers into the future. Lifelong learning will include a particular focus on the area of Adult Religious Education.

## Research

The future for the Institute in relation to research will be about defining and implementing a Research Strategy. This strategy will bring an international perspective to the Institute.



## Staffing

The Institute's greatest resource is its staff. Over the past number of years the staff have contributed in varied ways to several notable achievements including:

- the linkage agreement with DCU
  - the accreditation of several new undergraduate and postgraduate programmes
  - the introduction of Irish Studies as a new subject
- 
- the outreach of the MA in School Chaplaincy to four centres apart from Dublin
  - the provision of a joint programme with Edgehill Theological College in Belfast
  - the publication of a new journal, *REA*
  - the computerisation of the library catalogue
  - the provision of support for the introduction of the new syllabus in Religious Education in second-level schools
  - the joint provision with St Patrick's College of Education, Drumcondra, of the Masters in Religious Education (Primary).

The next five years will be a period of consolidation based on staff development and appointments in key areas to strengthen the teaching and research capacity of the Institute.



## Principal Areas of Development for MDI – Undergraduate

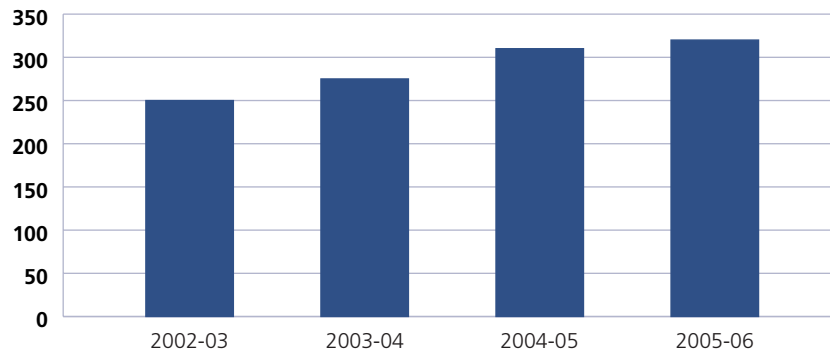
The Institute has witnessed a strong demand for its graduates since the late 1960s. Looking to the future, it is expected that this demand will continue for at least two reasons: the decline in the number of Religious and Priests available and the introduction of Religious Education as an examination subject in second-level schools. In relation to undergraduate programmes the Institute will continue to focus on Teacher Education, Irish Studies, inter-church and inter-faith dialogue. In particular, the Institute will:

- Adopt a flexible approach to the provision of education – in line with future demand.
- Continually review its Teacher Education programme in the light of national and international reports and policies (The Review of Post-Primary Teacher Education, The Teaching Council, OECD and EU analyses, Church Documentation).
- Service the introduction, by the Department of Education and Science, of Religious Education as an examinable subject in post-primary schools.

In line with these objectives, MDI will actively pursue the following strategies within the undergraduate dimension:

- Continue to be a leader in providing teachers of Religious Education for second-level schools.
- Further development of the new Bachelor of Arts programme, which was first accredited in 2002.
- Promotion of undergraduate programmes to Mature, Access and Part-time Students.

### Predicted Undergraduate Growth



Through these strategies, undergraduate numbers within the Institute are expected to expand year-on-year, to a minimum of 320 students in 2005/06.



## Principal Areas of Development for MDI – Postgraduate/Adult Education

*“Not observers of change,  
but participants in change...  
Not complaining about  
change, but by being  
catalysts of change...  
Not by sitting on the  
fence, but by becoming  
players on the field”.*

Within the Postgraduate/Adult Education path of the future, MDI will:

- ...be highly focused, building on the core strengths of the Institute in Religion, Education, the Arts and culture
  - ...offer the possibility of accreditation for all postgraduate programmes
  - ...continue to offer postgraduate programmes – adopting a partnership approach with other institutions for some courses
  - ...provide Continuing Professional Development to teachers, chaplains and others involved in pastoral care
  - ...seek to enhance some postgraduate programmes by developing an international aspect
- ...adopt a flexible approach to the provision of postgraduate and adult education by strengthening and possibly expanding the Institute’s current modes of delivery. This approach will particularly focus on and adopt advances in e-learning and other Information Communication Technology
  - ...recognise and acknowledge the importance of Lifelong Learning, and in particular commit to the provision of Adult Religious Education
  - ...seek to respond to emerging needs through the postgraduate and adult education programmes offered

The current Postgraduate profile consists of more than 150 students.

### Postgraduate/Adult Education Growth

Programme Offering	2003	2007
Existing Programmes	150	100-150
New Postgraduate Programmes, including research	–	30-50
Pastoral Needs		
• Adult Religious Education		
• Lay ministry	–	50-75
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>180-275</b>



The Institute will endeavour to:

- Maintain postgraduate numbers between 100-150 on existing programmes
- Increase the number of postgraduate students doing degrees by research
- Respond to emerging needs in the areas of pastoral care, adult religious education and lay ministry

## Principal Areas of Development for MDI – Research

### Research Strategy of the Institute

Prior to the institutional linkage with Dublin City University, the Institute lacked a formal institutional research strategy – although high-quality research and publications were produced by individual staff members. The development of the Institute in the wider University context has immediate implications for the Institute’s research profile and has called for a wider institutionally based research strategy. In addition, the 1999 Agreement for Institutional Linkage with Dublin City University specified that the Institute and the University would: “*Seek opportunities to promote inter-institutional co-operation*” and stated that this particular emphasis “*will be directed to...research and the strengthening of support structures for research at Mater Dei and their linkage to the University*”.

The Institute’s commitment to research in all of its areas of expertise is demonstrated by the publication *REA: A Journal of Religion, Education and the Arts*, which features the work of scholars from within the Institute in combination with contributions from the national and international academic community. *REA* is dedicated from time to time to the production of special issues that make salient the areas in which MDI is playing an important role in academic culture.

Among the strategic objectives of the Institute in relation to Research are:

- To define an Institutional Research Strategy which will co-ordinate and prioritise research activities.
- To facilitate academic staff of the Institute in undertaking coordinated research within the parameters set by the research strategy using a variety of mechanisms.
- To form partnerships at national and international level with other research centres, agencies and individuals in order to co-operate on research projects cognate to the research profile.
- To disseminate research findings through seminars and publications and through participation in national and international conferences.



The following activities will be pursued in line with the above objectives:

- Develop a “Mater Dei Centre for Research”. The centre will reflect the strengths of the Institute.
- Explore the possibility of establishing an Irish Studies Centre with national and/or international Strategic Partners.
- Seek public and private funding for research.
- Investigate the possibility of introducing an International Postgraduate Programme. Such a programme might be developed in collaboration with an international partner and would require the Institute to source private funding in addition to current incomes. The subject focus of the programme would build on the Institute’s research competence.

## **Implementation Plan**

Detailed implementation plans have been drawn up. There will be close monitoring of these plans and a formal review of overall implementation to date in Autumn 2005 by an external expert.





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