



RESEARCH DISCIPLINE AREA VALIDATION

Discipline Area:	Heritage Studies
Date of Panel:	26 th March 2018
Review panel:	<p>Dr Derek O’Byrne, Registrar, Waterford Institute of Technology (Chair)</p> <p>Dr Nessa Cronin, Lecturer in Irish Studies, NUI Galway</p> <p>Dr Kieran O’Connor, Senior Lecturer in Archaeology, NUI Galway</p> <p>Mr Michael Quinn, Development Officer, Galway Civic Trust</p> <p>Mr Marcus Byrne, Hardiman Scholar and PhD Candidate</p>
Proposing Staff:	<p>Dr Mark McCarthy</p> <p>Dr Fiona White</p> <p>Mr Michael Gill</p> <p>Mr Diarmuid O’Conghaile</p> <p>Mr Paul Gosling</p> <p>Dr Sarah Berthaud</p> <p>Dr Deirdre O’Mahony</p> <p>Dr Suzanne O’Shea</p> <p>Dr Shirley Wrynn</p> <p>Dr Cillian Roden</p>
Proposal:	<p>This proposal arises from the introduction of the “Sectoral Protocol for the Awarding of Research Master’s Degrees at NFQ Level 9 under delegated authority (DA) from Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)” and the subsequent “GMIT policy NFQ Level 9 Research Discipline Area Validation Policy and Procedures.”</p> <p>The Heritage Research Group submitted an application, in the form of a self-evaluation report, for validation and accreditation of delegated authority at level 9 of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) for the research degree programme leading to the award of Master of Arts (MA) in Heritage Studies.</p> <p>GMIT’s research validation policy requires the self-evaluation report to be considered by an external panel. The function of this panel is to evaluate the capacity/capability to run research Masters programmes (level 9) in the discipline of heritage</p>

	<p>studies. The following criteria are to be used in assessing the proposal:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The link between research activity in a research unit and the Institute’s Research Strategy has been established; 2. There is support for the new research degree discipline area from relevant external stakeholders; 3. The infrastructure, staffing and resources for the new research degree discipline area will be made available; 4. The Academic Unit, Research Centre or Research Group has the research capability; level and range of competencies and expertise necessary to deliver the Research Degree Programme(s) in the discipline area. 5. Organisation, sustainability and the research unit’s growth trajectory were evaluated.
<p>Findings and Recommendation:</p>	<p>Following consideration of the self-evaluation report, the panel was of the view that the GMIT has the appropriate capacity and capability to run research masters programmes in heritage studies, as proposed. Therefore, the panel recommends that delegated authority for level 9 research programmes in Heritage Studies.</p> <p>Under each criterion, the panel had the following findings:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The link between research activity in a research unit and the Institute’s Research Strategy has been established The proposed increase in research programmes in the discipline of heritage is supportive of the Institute’s research ambition and pursuit of Technological University designation. The critical mass of activity generated by the continued development of staff and postgraduate research in the discipline of Heritage studies has had a measurable impact on the level of GMIT’s research capacity. 2. There is support for the new research degree discipline area from relevant external stakeholders The Heritage Research Group demonstrated extensive links to a variety of stakeholders including local authorities, museums, further education bodies, civic bodies, societies, genealogical organisations, heritage attractions, heritage businesses, local communities, and with academics in other Institutions. As part of the self-evaluation process, the Heritage Research Group conducted a survey of a selection of stakeholders, who voiced unanimous support for the provision of research degree programmes in Heritage Studies. This was evidenced in the response rates and supporting comments provided in the documentation reviewed by the panel. 3. The infrastructure, staffing and resources for the new research degree discipline area will be made available

	<p>Supervision of research leading to the award of MA in Heritage Studies is available from 13 staff members in the Heritage Research Group, spread across three of GMIT's campuses. In GMIT staff are allocated 2 hours, from a 16-hour teaching contract, to supervise research students. Research students are provided with office facilities, library training, participate in an annual Postgraduate Colloquium for Humanities and may avail of research modules.</p> <p>The panel met with two research postgraduate students, who were very complimentary of their student experience, and the assistance and support afforded by their supervisors, other heritage studies staff, the research office and library staff.</p> <p>4. The Academic Unit, Research Centre or Research Group has the research capability; level and range of competencies and expertise necessary to deliver the Research Degree Programme(s) in the discipline area.</p> <p>The panel expressed confidence that the Heritage Research Group have the required capability and competencies to deliver level 9 research master programmes. The mentoring system to develop first time research supervisors was noted, as was the involvement of industry advisors.</p> <p>5. Organisation, sustainability and the research unit's growth trajectory were evaluated.</p> <p>Whilst this panel is concerned with Level 9, it is evident to the panel that the clear intent of the Heritage Research Group should be to work towards an application for delegated authority at Level 10 in the future. A comprehensive, open discussion took place in this regard, and the panel made a number of recommendations as outlined below, to assist the Heritage Research Group in achieving their ambition.</p>
<p>Recommendation</p>	<p>The panel encourages the Heritage Research Group to pursue its current trajectory towards expanded level 10 research. This will require a more systemised structure for the provision of learning opportunities and research focus. To progress in this regard, the panel makes the following recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formulate research and research degree strategies within the heritage discipline including the articulation of the necessary infrastructure at the research group level to enable the team deliver on the strategy. • Consider the structure of research degree programmes in light of on-going national developments in doctoral education. The team might also consider how they would shape the sectorial development of research in the heritage area through connectivity and collaboration.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a systemised approach to the management of the lifecycle of the PhD student. • Define and consider how to deal with the critical mass of research students that are required to sustain a research discipline within GMIT. • Consider how the Heritage Studies PhD programme enhances opportunities available to the student, and the career development of graduates. • Develop a plan to ensure the sustainability of the Heritage Research Group. • A funding strategy should be formulated to explore how external funding mechanisms might be used to enhance the output and resource base of the group. • A resourcing strategy should be developed, in conjunction with the Institution, which may provide for sabbaticals/resource allocation templates or other resourcing agreements such as sharing of income generation etc.
FAO Academic Council	Approved.
Signed:	Chair
Signed:	Secretary
Date:	