

1.	Title of Programme(s): (incl. Award Type and Specify Embedded Exit Awards)	Master of Science in Outdoor Education, Sustainability and Well-being – Major Award, Structured Research Masters Certificate in Outdoor Education, Sustainability and Well-being - Embedded Minor Award
2.	NFQ Level(s)/ No. ECTS:	Level 9 MSc: 90 Credits Certificate: 30 Credits
3.	Duration:	MSc: Part-time; 2 years, 4 semesters Certificate: Part-time, 1 year, 2 semesters
4.	ISCED Code:	
5.	School / Centre:	Health Science, Wellbeing and Society
6.	Department:	Environmental Humanities & Social Sciences
7.	Type of Review:	New Programme
8.	Date of Review:	04/11/2021
9.	Proposed Programme Start Date:	September 2022
10.	Delivery Mode:	Blended
11.	Panel Members:	Ms Aileen Kennedy (Chair), Assistant Registrar and Head of Student Engagement, Munster Technological University, Tralee Dr Kaye Richards, Senior Lecturer in Psychology, Liverpool John Moore's University Dr Andrew Bobilya, Professor and Programme Director of the Masters in Experiential and Outdoor Education Programme, North Carolina, United States Ms Shirley Gleeson, Nature & Wellbeing Consultant and the Director of Ecowellness Consulting Ltd, Dublin Mr Hugh McBride, GMIT (Secretary) In attendance as a note-taker: Ms Esther Seery, GMIT
12.	Proposing Staff:	Mr Kevin O'Callaghan Mr Stephen Hannon Mr Davy Walsh Ms Orla Prendergast Mr John Gately Ms Mairead Cluskey Ms Janine McGinn Ms Carmel Heaney Ms Pauline Jordan Ms Ann Caulfield Mr Justin Kerr Dr Deirdre Garvey Mr Michael Gill Dr Mark Kelly

13.	Programme Rationale:	<p>The aim of the proposed programme is to provide a broad base for a professional career in outdoor education. It is designed to support those currently involved in, or interested in becoming involved in, using an outdoor setting for their work.</p> <p>The field of outdoor education has grown and evolved over the last fifty years both in the formal and informal education sectors. It has evolved from a focus on adventure sports and technical and instructional aspects to a broader emphasis on experiential learning, education for sustainability and holistic development. A change in ethos is reflected in an increasing focus on the environment and people's intrinsic role and connection to the environment; and in the increasing convergence of outdoor studies, education for sustainability and well-being studies at both a philosophical and practical level.</p> <p>Consistent with this broadening view of outdoor education, the proposed programme is rooted in an ecocentric world-view emphasising humanity's ontological connection with the natural world. It aims to foster an empathy, respect and learning ethos towards the natural world, and incorporates three key themes: connection and interdependence with the biosphere (sustainability), the role of place and connectedness with place (place and landscape), and the importance of nature and the diversity of its experiences for well-being (well-being).</p> <p>The growth in outdoor education as an area of study is evident in the increasing provision at undergraduate level both nationally and internationally. In addition to specialist outdoor education degree programmes, early childhood education and primary education degree programmes now incorporate significant elements of outdoor learning. This in turn has given rise to a demand for professionals in the field with a higher level of educational attainment and the capacity to critically assess the theoretical, professional and academic issues associated with delivering educational and developmental programmes in an outdoor setting.</p> <p>There has also been an acceleration in publications in outdoor studies internationally and a growing field of research highlighting the importance of the role of natural environments in well-being. The Covid19 pandemic has further boosted recognition of the importance that the outdoors plays in facilitating the well-being of populations.</p> <p>There are currently seven Masters' programmes in the field of outdoor education in the UK. However, at present, there is no such post-graduate offering at Level 9 on the island of Ireland. The proposed MSc will address this gap in progression opportunity, provide an accessible route for the development of research and scholarship in outdoor education in Ireland, and facilitate the development of an Irish based research community of learning.</p>
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		<p>GMIT has delivered a high quality undergraduate degree in outdoor education at the Mayo Campus since 1996. The programme team are recognised leaders of the disciplinary field in Ireland and have consolidated their position with a series of developments in the last five years including: the organisation of national and international academic and professional practitioner conferences; workshops promoting outdoor play and outdoor learning; and CPD events for outdoor professionals in the region. In 2020 the team was commissioned, on behalf of Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI), to produce a national consultation and review report on outdoor education provision in Ireland. This demonstrates both GMIT's increasing standing nationally in this field and the rising importance of outdoor education within the education sector.</p>
14.	<p>Proposed Student Intake:</p>	<p>An annual intake of 20 students is envisaged (combined total across the principal and embedded programmes).</p> <p>Initially, strong demand from the outdoor sector and the primary education sector is anticipated. A number of potential learner profiles are identified including: outdoor education graduates; existing ETBI staff; youth reach and other FET sector trainers; primary school teachers; post-primary school teachers; international students (especially northern Europe); adventure tourism entrepreneurs.</p> <p>Changes in regulations and fees for EU students studying in the UK as a result of Brexit provides an opportunity for Ireland as an alternative location for an outdoor education Masters programme delivered through English.</p> <p>The programme team recognise and welcome the potential diversity of the student intake cohort. The implications and potential value of this has been considered in the curriculum design and in formulating the teaching, learning and assessment strategies.</p>
15.	<p>Stakeholder Engagement:</p>	<p>The need for, development and design of the proposed programme was informed by a comprehensive process of research and consultation with key stakeholders. This included: the commissioned research undertaken by GMIT's outdoor education programme team for the ETBI on outdoor education provision in Ireland; a survey of GMIT's outdoor education graduates; consultation interviews with educators and researchers in the field, with professional practitioners in the outdoor education community, and with employers; an on-line survey of primary school teachers.</p> <p>The programme team undertook a scoping survey and analysis of similar Level 9 programmes in the area that are on offer in the UK and in the US.</p> <p>The focus and design of the proposed programme was also shaped by a number of regional, national and international policy frameworks including: the Strategic Plan for the promotion of Adventure Sports</p>

		<p>in County Mayo (Mayo Co. Co., 2007); the updated Mayo County Development Plan 2014 – 2020 (Mayo Co. Co., 2017); the National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development in Ireland, 2014-2020 (Department of Education and Skills, 2018); the focus of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) in creating opportunities and linkages for education for sustainability in the primary and post-primary curriculum (NCCA, 2018); UNESCO’s promotion of Education for Sustainable Development Goals (UNESCO, 2017); and Education Scotland’s conception of Learning for Sustainability (Education Scotland, 2013).</p> <p>The strategic alignment of the proposed programme with national policy and strategies was considered, and its alignment with GMIT’s strategic plan and the priorities for the Mayo Campus.</p> <p>The programme team are cognizant of the opportunities the development of the new Technological University presents for future expertise sharing and collaboration with colleagues and learners in the proposed Connaught-Ulster Alliance (CUA). In this context, staff from the Letterkenny Institute of Technology, a partner in the CUA, were consulted as part of the development process and provided welcome advice and support.</p> <p>The programme development team is cross disciplinary, involving a collaboration of lecturers teaching across 12 different degree programmes. The design was also informed by informal consultations with academic colleagues in other third level institutes in Ireland and the UK.</p>
16.	<p>Graduate Demand/Employment:</p>	<p>Graduates of the proposed programme will have a sound understanding of the theory and practice of outdoor experiential education and its use in the promotion of education for sustainability, environmental education, and personal and social development. They will be able to apply this understanding in a variety of employment settings, and will be capable of critically evaluating existing provision, challenging assumptions, challenging policy and agendas to ensure the workplace and those they work with are prepared for the future.</p> <p>This programme will support outdoor professionals throughout Ireland to develop and upskill, exposing them to new and current policy guided practice whilst gaining an academic award. This may lead to promotional opportunities and/or support those potentially seeking positions as educators who will utilise the outdoors.</p> <p>Employment opportunities for graduates include: within the broad youth and community sector; within the formal education sector; within the environmental studies sector; within the adventure tourism sector; within the adventure therapy sector.</p>

17.	Entry Requirements, Access, Transfer & Progression:	<p>The minimum entry requirement will be a Level 8 degree at H2.2 or equivalent and at least 2 years relevant outdoor education experience. There is no cognate award requirement as candidates may be from a diversity of backgrounds. Candidates will be required to submit a personal statement.</p> <p>Applicants can be considered through Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).</p> <p>It is envisaged that the programme team will be actively involved in processing applications.</p> <p>Students enrolled on the Certificate programme may transfer onto the Masters programme and vice versa.</p>
18.	Programme Structure:	<p>The proposed Masters programme will be delivered over 4 semesters across 2 academic years. The first semester comprises two taught modules - Education for Sustainability (10 Credit) and Nature and Well-being (10 Credit). The second semester also comprises two taught modules – Experiential Learning, Landscape and Place (10 Credit) and Applied Research (10 Credit). Semesters 3 and 4 comprise a supervised research module, Dissertation/Applied Research Project (50 Credit), which, in addition to individual supervision, includes support workshops for students.</p> <p>The proposed Certificate Masters programme will be delivered over 2 semesters in 1 academic year. The first semester comprises two taught modules - Education for Sustainability (10 Credit) and Nature and Well-being (10 Credit). The second semester comprises one taught modules – Experiential Learning, Landscape and Place (10 Credit).</p>
19.	Learning, Teaching & Assessment Strategies:	<p>The pedagogy for the proposed programme is experiential, transformational and immersive. The programme team consider this to be consistent with the programme philosophy and aims, and with research on teaching and learning approaches in outdoor education, education for sustainability and wellbeing.</p> <p>The delivery mode will be blended, involving an integrated combination of face-to-face teaching and experiential elements during scheduled multi-day residential sessions (including interactive workshops, peer-to-peer collaborations and a 5-day immersive journey) and guided online engagement.</p> <p>The programme is 100% continuous assessment. There will be an emphasis on assessment approaches that are learner centred, collaborative, reflective, and that have an orientation towards action, community and civic engagement. The intention is that these approaches will enable lecturers and students to capture their personal transformation and civic engagement and enable their assessment to be a critical aspect of their learning. The programme will use a range</p>

		<p>of assessment methods including applied project work, critical reflection posts and reflective learning logs.</p> <p>The contextualisation and application of learning to workplace practice is central to the programme's assessment strategy. The ethos of the programme is to facilitate and engage students as active change agents. The formative nature of the assignments is to engage students with their workplace in developing and delivering programmes related to the subject content within the modules.</p> <p>In this context, students enrolled on the programme are required to be in employment. Students not in employment will be actively supported in finding a workplace, whether in a voluntary, part-time or full-time capacity.</p> <p>It is intended that the Award will be classified, and that student performance in each module will be considered, in a weighted manner, towards determining the classification.</p>
20.	Resource Implications:	<p>The need for an additional staffing resource of 1.5 FTE has been identified. Additional library resources will also be required to ensure core, related and ancillary texts and journals are available through on-line access.</p> <p>The programme will be self-financing.</p>
21.	Synergies with Existing Programmes:	<p>None are specified. However, the programme team recognise that there is potential scope for collaboration and sharing with other Level 9 programmes offered on the Mayo Campus. In particular, there is potential for facilitating and establishing a community of practice for Masters' students.</p> <p>The Applied Research (10 Credit) module and the Dissertation/Applied Research Project (50 Credit) module are generic in nature and are offered on other Masters' programmes at Mayo Campus.</p>
22.	Findings and Recommendations:	<p>The validation Panel consider that the proposed programme concept is valid, that the rationale for the programme is well-researched, that there will be a demand for the programme, that the programme will meet genuine education and training needs, and that it will be a valuable addition to the field of outdoor education in Ireland. The proposed programme is highly relevant in the contemporary environment and addresses a significant gap in national education provision that accords with regional and national policy priorities.</p> <p>The Panel commend the programme team for the initiative and for the scope of background research and stakeholder engagement; for their evident shared ownership of the programme design; for their commitment to supporting learners and to ensuring they have a high-quality education experience; and for the open, constructive and</p>

enthusiastic manner in which they engaged with the Panel during the on-line review meeting.

The rationale for the choice of award title and the core philosophy and key themes underlying the design of the programme are explained in the programme document. These were further clarified and articulated convincingly by the programme team during the review meeting.

In general, the Panel is satisfied that the proposed programme aim, award title and design have validity, consistent with the underlying core philosophy and key themes identified. However, the Panel, is concerned about the overall coherence and integration of the programme around the core thread of outdoor education. In particular, whether this core thread is sufficiently inter-woven, embedded and manifest in the programme intended learning outcomes, in the module intended learning outcomes, in the module indicative content and reading lists, and in the planned modes of delivery and assessment. The Panel consider that this concern should be addressed to contextualise, strengthen, enhance and ensure the inter-connectedness, synthesis and congruence of all programme elements within an outdoor education disciplinary framework, to avoid fragmentation of the curriculum content into three separate strands, to foster a disciplinary coherence and integration in content and delivery, and to strengthen the legitimacy of the named elements in the award title.

In this context, the programme team might consider, inter alia, changing the proposed sequence of module delivery, using the Experiential Learning, Landscape and Place module in the first semester to frame and contextualise all elements of the programme.

In this context also, the generic nature of the Applied Research and Dissertation/Applied Research Project modules should be adapted to contextualise expectations grounded in the programme's underlying philosophy and key themes. The preparation of a dissertation handbook is considered essential in this regard. Consideration might also be given to amending the module intended learning outcomes, adapting them to the outdoor education disciplinary context and emphasising the integration of programme themes.

The Panel also consider that there is a need for the programme team to undertake a comprehensive edit of the programme documents. A range of issues and concerns about the proposed programmes, arising from the documentation provided to the Panel, were competently addressed and explained by the programme team during the meeting with the Panel. There is, however, a need to review and amend the documentation to provide the necessary clarity around the issues and concerns raised.


The Panel are satisfied that adequate consideration has been given by the programme team to the additional resource requirements

necessary to ensure the initial successful delivery of the programme. However, they recommend that the team reflect on the adequacy of the resource base identified for the long-term viability, development and enhancement of the programme.

The Panel is satisfied to recommend approval for the proposed programme, and for its constituent embedded award, subject to the programme team addressing the following conditions (which follow from the discussion above) and recommendations:

Conditions:

1. Review the programme design to contextualise, strengthen, enhance and ensure the overall cohesion and integration of the programme within an Outdoor Education disciplinary framework.
This should include a review of the intended programme learning outcomes, of module descriptors, of the sequencing of module delivery, and of approaches to teaching, learning and assessment.
The review should not presume / state that an holistic view point and environmental approaches have not been part of Outdoor Education traditions and practices. There is much discourse historically in Outdoor Education (including definitions and practices) that have reflected this position over many years (and have also been taught in wider HE curriculum). The claims that it has not displaces Outdoor Education theory, research and practice. Accordingly, this emphasis needs to be revisited, otherwise it does not accurately represent Outdoor Education, and risks a bias conceptualisation of the field as it were. It can emphasis it as part of the programme approach, but not infer this is a unique development or new approach as it were.
It should address the adaption of the generic research modules to the programme, including the preparation of a dissertation handbook.
2. Review the Nature and Well-being module: (i) to ensure that it is accurately contextualised in the breadth and depth from outdoor practices that have developed therapeutic practices for mental health and well-being (e.g. outdoor/adventure therapy); (ii) to more carefully locate the relevant discourse that positions mental health and well-being in the module description, so this aligns with mainstream perspectives.
3. Review and amend the programme documents:
 - to ensure consistency in the use of language, including consistency in reference to award titles;
 - to clarify the proposals for embedded awards;
 - to confirm the proposed start date;

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to remove repetition in intended learning outcomes and ensure that programme and module intended learning outcomes reflect Level 9 expectations; • to clarify the prior level of outdoor education knowledge, skills and competencies necessary for entry onto the programme; • to clarify entry requirements, access routes and internal transfer arrangement for the principal and embedded awards; • remove reference to the requirement to complete a qualifying exam; • to specify the minimum English language proficiency for international applicants; • to clarify that enrolled students will be part-time; • to clarify that enrolled students are required to have access to a workplace in an outdoor context; • to commit the programme team to actively support students who do not have access to a workplace to engage with either an agency or a workplace in a voluntary or part time capacity; • to explain the on-line learning elements of the proposed programme delivery; • to refer to the arrangements for upholding academic honesty and integrity; • to clarify that the award will be classified; • to remove any reference to staged progression within the programme; • to clarify the expected time commitment for enrolled learners and their pathway through the programme; • to clarify whether the residential element is compulsory; • to commit to preparing a student handbook, outlining the programme and its requirements in detail. 	
		<p>Recommendations:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reflect on the resource planning to ensure adequate provision for long term viability, development and programme enhancement. 2. Consider including an applicant interview as part of the applications evaluation process. 3. Include a summary table showing the calculation of delivery hours as specified on the Approved Programme Schedule and in the module descriptors. 4. Remove the reference to 'psychotherapy' from the Nature and Well-being module. 	
23.	FAO: Academic Council:	<p>Approved:</p> <p>Approved subject to recommended changes:</p> <p>Not approved at this time:</p>	✓
	Signed:		

No.	Name	Ms. Aileen Kennedy	
		Chair	Secretary

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