

## VALIDATION REPORT

1.	<b>Title of Programme(s):</b> (incl. Award Type and Specify Embedded Exit Awards)	MSc in Strength and Conditioning (90 ECTS) Certificate in Strength and Conditioning (30 ECTS) Exit Award for MSc in Strength and Conditioning: Certificate in Strength and Conditioning (30 ECTS)
2.	<b>NFQ Level(s)/ No. ECTS:</b>	9 90 ECTS (30 ECTS)
3.	<b>Duration:</b>	1.5 years (1 year)
4.	<b>ISCED Code:</b>	1014
5.	<b>School / Centre:</b>	School of Science and Computing
6.	<b>Department:</b>	Department of Natural Science
7.	<b>Type of Review:</b>	New Programme
8.	<b>Date of Review:</b>	24 <sup>th</sup> February 2020
9.	<b>Delivery Mode:</b>	Full-time
10.	<b>Panel Members:</b>	Dr Joe McGarry, Education Consultant (Chair) Dr Paula Rankin, Head of Department of Science and Health, IT Carlow Mr Richard Bolger, Lecturer in Sport and Exercise Science, Waterford IT Mr David Howarth, Head of Athletic Performance, Connacht Rugby Ms Carmel Brennan, Assistant Registrar (Quality)
11.	<b>Proposing Staff:</b>	Dr Des Foley Dr Lisa Ryan Mr John Duggan Mr Ed Daly
12.	<b>Programme Rationale:</b>	Strength and conditioning is the application of scientific principles in order to understand and enhance sport and exercise performance and health and well-being. The programme is designed to provide students with a sound grounding in the scientific method in the context of strength and conditioning. Key areas of study include physiology, coaching, psychology, nutrition and metabolism with a focus on practical application of strength and conditioning. All students will complete a variety of lab techniques in strength and conditioning a hypothesis driven research project.  The scale of the sports sector can be gauged from the fact that more than 38,000 people are employed in this industry in Ireland, with 270,000 volunteers active across all sporting codes (1). Furthermore, with the increased number of the

		<p>population suffering from, or at risk of developing, lifestyle-related chronic diseases (2), more individuals require assistance with training and physical activity. As a result, there is an urgent need for suitably qualified individuals to work in the sports and health sectors. Strength and conditioning (S&amp;C) has been gaining popularity as an area of study, nationally and globally. While the term S&amp;C has previously been synonymous with elite sports and elite performance, the general principles of S&amp;C can be applied to anyone, either recreational or elite with the goal of improving their fitness, health and wellbeing. With a more informed population relating to health and wellbeing, it is imperative that appropriately qualified S&amp;C professionals are provided to meet the growing need to advise on general fitness training, the development of various physical qualities e.g. strength, power, speed, agility, flexibility, mobility, hypertrophy (muscle growth), endurance.</p> <p>1. The Irish Sports Council (2013). <i>The Irish Sports Monitor Annual Report 2013</i>. The Economic and Social Research Institute, The Irish Sports Council.</p> <p>2. Department of Health (2015). <i>Health in Ireland – key trends 2015</i>. Available at <a href="http://health.gov.ie/">http://health.gov.ie/</a></p>
13.	<b>Potential Demand for Entry:</b>	16 students are targeted for entry onto this programme.
14.	<b>Stakeholder Engagement:</b>	<p>Sport and Exercise experts and sport and exercise professionals in Ireland were contacted to discuss the outline of the programme as well as the graduate profile and the desirable characteristics of the graduate, as they see it. A consistent key message emerging from the consultation process was the lack of access to specialised programmes in Strength &amp; Conditioning in Ireland.</p> <p>Several individuals involved in different areas of sport as well as individuals working in the sports &amp; exercise industry in an elite sport capacity were consulted. Qualified sport and exercise scientists capable of working as part of sport and exercise teams was viewed as an area that would see considerable growth over the next few years as the sport and health industry in Ireland goes from strength to strength. During the consultation process they highlighted the need to not only develop S&amp;C graduates but also to ensure the quality and standard of the teaching in addition to a high level of practical experience throughout the course of study.</p>

15.	<b>Graduate Demand:</b>	Specific job opportunities for graduates include strength and conditioning coaches with amateur or elite teams, performance analysis, athlete development programmes, public health improvement, addressing inequalities in health, developing/commissioning and implementing policies and programs, monitoring, evaluation and assessment of training needs in individuals/teams, education and generating research evidence linking training regimes and sport and exercise performance across a range of employers.
16.	<b>Entry Requirements, Access, Transfer &amp; Progression:</b>	<p><b>Minimum Entry Requirements</b> Candidates must hold a cognate Level 8 Bachelor (Hons) degree with a minimum grade classification of H2.2 or equivalent.</p> <p><b>English Language Requirements</b> English Language Requirements will be as determined by GMIT and as published in the Access, Transfer and Progression code. The current requirements are as follows: Non-EU applicants who are not English speakers must have a minimum score of 6.0 (with a minimum of 6.0 in each component) in the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) or equivalent. All results must have been achieved within 2 years of application to GMIT.</p> <p>EU applicants who are not English speakers are recommended to have a minimum score of 6.0 (with a minimum of 6.0 in each component) in the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) or equivalent.</p> <p><b>Recognition of Prior Learning</b> GMIT is committed to the principles of transparency, equity and fairness in recognition of prior learning (RPL) and to the principle of valuing all learning regardless of the mode or place of its acquisition. Recognition of Prior Learning may be used to: gain access or advanced entry to a programme at Stage 2 or higher, subject to available places. (Stage 1 entry through CAO) gain credits and exemptions from programme modules after admission in award years RPL will be considered, to a 50% maximum (30 credits Academic Code of Practice No. 6 outlines the policies and procedures for the Recognition of Prior Learning. Guidance for applicants is provided on <a href="http://myexperience.ie">myexperience.ie</a></p>

		<p><b>Selection</b> Applicants will be offered places following open public competition. Applicants will be short listed based on academic performance and experience and may be selected following interview.</p> <p><b>Garda Vetting</b> It is a requirement that all students for this programme are Garda vetted by GMIT on commencement of their studies.</p>
17.	<b>Programme Structure:</b>	The programme will be delivered over 3 semesters, with 15 ECTS of taught modules in semesters 1 and 2. The Research Project module (60 ECTS) will be undertaken throughout each of the three semesters.
18.	<b>Learning, Teaching &amp; Assessment Strategies:</b>	<p>Student-centred teaching strategies will maximise problem-based learning focussed on authentic real-world scenarios relevant to the discipline. Active learning approaches (professional practice, research-based projects, field exercises, practical classes) will ensure that learning through doing dominates the programme rather than passive learning achieved by traditional lecturing approaches. A variety of teaching modalities that fit the content of a course will be used:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lectures (provided by academic &amp; research staff, industry).</li> <li>• Seminars: a session in which a specific topic fitting the scope of the course is discussed by an expert in the field</li> <li>• Practical exercises: sessions in sport facilities in which students get hands-on practical training</li> <li>• Intensive group activities, in class debates, role play, journal clubs</li> <li>• Research based learning: learning from being actively or passively involved in a research activity</li> </ul> <p>Most modules on this programme use various types of continuous assessment as the primary assessment strategy. Assessments are aligned with the module and programme learning outcomes. The assessment types are varied, and include: written technical reports based on work carried out in the field, written assignments based on experimental work in the laboratory, oral presentations, technical assignments in nutrition and dietary strategies, statistical analysis, a literature review, an ethics application and a research paper for publication. The assessment strategy will be reviewed annually by the programme board.</p>

		An assessment schedule will be drawn up by the programme board at the start of the semester to ensure a balanced workload for students over the entire semester. Where appropriate, integrated assessments will be used between modules.
19.	Resource Implications:	One additional lecturer will be required to deliver this programme. In addition, the programme requires half the normal weekly hours of a technician.
20.	Synergies with Existing Programmes:	None.
21.	Findings and Recommendations:	<b>General:</b>
		The panel recommend approval of the programme subject to the following condition (1) and recommendations (15):
		<b>Special conditions attaching to approval (if any):</b>
		1. The documentation should clarify that approval was sought for the Certificate in Strength and Conditioning as a stand-alone award in addition to being an embedded exit award for the MSc in Strength and Conditioning.
		<b>Recommendations of the panel in relation to award sought:</b>
		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Give examples in the 'Research Project' module of the type of projects that students may engage in. All the skills required by students to undertake their research project (e.g. statistical programming, academic writing) should be specifically included within the taught content of either the Research Methods or Research Project module descriptors.</li> <li>2. Include the blended delivery for the Research Methods and Exercise Physiology, Nutrition and Human Performance modules in their delivery mode table within the module descriptor.</li> <li>3. Revisit the learning outcomes for the Exercise Physiology, Nutrition and Human Performance module to better reflect the balance of the module content. Review the amount of assessment required to be undertaken by students in this module.</li> <li>4. Review syllabi for each module to clearly articulate the theory and practical elements of the modules.</li> <li>5. Ensure module learning outcomes are appropriate for level 9 modules in all instances.</li> <li>6. Review the learning resources for modules to ensure that they are up to date. Recommend resources for students undertaking the Research Methods and the Research Project modules.</li> </ol>

		<p>7. Resubmit the APS showing the programme's delivery over two stages.</p> <p>8. Review assessment of modules and where appropriate remove duplication of assessment of module learning outcomes.</p> <p>9. The aim of the programme of focusing on special populations, in addition to athletic populations, should to some degree, be reflected in the programme learning outcomes and in module descriptors.</p> <p>10. Ensure that field assessment techniques for determining exercise performance, performance analysis and anthropometry are included in the programme aims.</p> <p>11. Clarify the proposed delivery schedule for this programme, so that prospective students are aware of the requirements in advance of applying.</p> <p>12. Support students in the dissemination of their research nationally and internationally.</p> <p>13. Consider the pass mark for the Masters and whether all taught modules should be compensatable.</p> <p>14. Clarify throughout the documentation that the Research Project module is 60 ECTS.</p> <p>15. Review documentation editing for typos.</p>	
22.	FAO: Academic Council:		
		Approved:	
		Approved subject to recommended changes:	X
		Not approved at this time:	
	Signed:		
		Chair	Secretary