GMIT

INSTITIÚID TEICNEOLAÍOCHTA NA GAILLIMHE-MAIGH EO
GALWAY-MAYO INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

Report of External Peer Review Group for the Programmatic Review of:

Named Award:	Bachelor of Business (Honours)
Programme Title(s):	Bachelor of Business (Honours) Accounting
Exit Award(s):	N/A
Award Type:	Honours Degree
Award Class:	Major
NFQ Level:	Level 8
ECTS / ACCS Credits:	240
Location:	Galway
Minor Award(s):	N/A

Panel Members

Name	Position	Organisation
Billy Bennett	Chair	LYIT
Gerry Talbot	Secretary	GMIT
Damien Courtney	IOT Member	CIT
James Cunningham	University Member	NUIG
Tom Canavan	Professional Practitioner	Self Employed
Chris Flatley	Institute Graduate	Deacy Gilligan

Programme Board Team

Delma Carey	Isabel Buchan	Joe Farrell
Ronan Mc Gearailt	Carmel Brennan	Sean Duignan
David Palcic	Richie Hoare	Louise Langan
Shane Moran	Kevin McDonagh	Noel Harvey
Patricia McCann	Nicholas Canny	Anthony Duggan

1 Introduction

The following report to Academic Council is a validation panel report from an expert panel of assessors on the 17th June 2014.

The report is divided into the following sections:

- Background to Proposed Programme
- General Findings of the Validation Panel
- Programme-Level Findings
- Module-Level Findings

2 Background to Proposed Programme

See Programme Self Evaluation Report (SER) for more detailed information.

3 General Findings of the External Peer Review Group

Recommendation(s):
The panel recommend that the programme team should ensure the panel have the opportunity to meet with a group of students from the programme at the next programmatic review.

Commendation(s):
The panel recognised that this is a very specialised programme which has achieved success in maximising professional body exceptions.

After discussions the panel have decided to approve the programme with no conditions some recommendations and commendations. The panel congratulated the Programme Board for the quality of their SER document.

Having considered the documentation provided and discussed it with the programme development team, the External Peer Review Group recommends the following:

Bachelor of Business (Honours) in Accounting
Place an x in the correct box.

Accredited for the next five academic years or until the next programmatic review, whichever occurs sooner	
Accredited subject to recommendations	X
Re-designed and re-submitted to the same External Peer Review Group after additional developmental work	
Not Accredited	

Note:
Approval is conditional on the submission of a revised programme document that takes account of the conditions and recommendations outlined below and a response document describing the actions of the Department to address the conditions and recommendations made by the External Peer Review Group (EPRG). The term Recommendation indicates an item to which the Programme Board should give serious consideration for implementation at an early stage and which should be the subject of on-going monitoring.

4 Programme-Level Findings
This section of the report addresses the following programme level considerations:
- Evidence of reflection by the programme board to include, where relevant evidence of collaboration and engagement with other programmes from a similar discipline area within GMIT
- Demand
- Award
- Entry requirements
- Access, transfer and progression

- Retention
- Standards and Outcomes
- Programme structure
- Learning and Teaching Strategies
- Assessment Strategy
- Resource requirements
- Research Activity
- Quality Assurance
- Internationalisation
- Professional Practice (Work Experience / Internship etc.)

4.1 Reflection, including internal and external engagement

Consideration for the panel:	Is there evidence of reflection in the SER of how the programme performed since the last programmatic review.
Overall Finding:	Yes

Commendation(s):
- The panel commend the programme team on the quality of the SER document. It is very well put together and has a lot of detail.
- The panel commend the quality of engagement between the programme team and management with the EPR panel.

4.2 Demand

Consideration for the panel:	Is there a need for the programme and has evidence been provided to support it?
Overall Finding:	Yes

4.3 Award

Consideration for the panel: ·	Is the level and type of the award appropriate?
Overall Finding:	Yes

It was noted that students have the option of transferring into Business and exiting with a Higher Certificate award.

Recommendation(s):
- The panel recommend that the programme team should consider offering an exit award after two years (Higher Certificate).

4.4 Entry Requirements

Consideration for the panel:	Are the entry requirements for the proposed programme clear and appropriate? Is there a relationship with this programme and further education?
Overall Finding:	Yes

4.5 Access, Transfer and Progression

Consideration for the panel:	Does the proposed programme incorporate the procedures for access, transfer and progression that have been established by the HEA and as contained in the Institute's Quality assurance Framework (QAF) COP No.4?
Overall Finding:	Yes

Commendation(s):
- The panel would like to commend the programme team on the progression opportunities to level 9 and the strong demand for the follow on level 9 programme.

Recommendation(s):
- The panel recommend that the programme team should consider opportunities for development of part-time programmes (minor/ SPA) and opportunities for specialised CPD (for example – taxation).

4.6 Retention

Consideration for the panel:	Does the proposed programme comply with the Institute norms for retention, both in first year and subsequent years? Are both elements of the First Year Experience {(i) Learning to Learn (now Learning and Skills Innovation) and (ii) PASS} embedded in this programme? Evidence of other retention initiatives?
Overall Finding:	Yes

It was noted that students who dropped out did so mostly after Year 1. In situations where students are opting to drop out - where possible an exit interview happens and they may choose to move over to the business programme.

4.7 Standards and Outcomes

Consideration for the panel:	Does the proposed programme meet the required award standards for programmes at the proposed NFQ level (i.e. conform to QQI Award Standards)? For parent award? For exit award (if applicable)? For Minor Award (if applicable)? For Special Purpose Award (if applicable)?
Overall Finding:	Yes

The awards standards requirements for programmes on the NFQ Framework can be found at http://www.hetac.ie/publications_pol01.htm

Recommendation(s):
- The panel recommend that the programme team should consider offering an exit award after two years (Higher Certificate).

4.8 Programme Structure

Consideration for the panel:	Is the programme structure logical and well designed and can the stated programme intended learning outcomes in terms of employment skills and career opportunities be met by this programme?
Overall Finding:	Yes

Commendation(s):
- The panel would like to commend the programme team on introducing transferable skills in a number of modules (e.g., Professional Development).

4.9 Learning and Teaching Strategies

Consideration for the panel:	Have appropriate learning and teaching strategies been provided for the proposed programme that support Student Centred Learning (SCL)? Evidence of consideration of flexible delivery methods including eLearning?
Overall Finding:	Yes

Recommendation(s):
- The panel recommend that the programme team should review how blended / e-learning can further enhance the learning experience of students, using interactive approaches to learning.
- The panel recommend that the programme team should review how the accounting discipline can be integrated across other departments and schools within GMIT. The panel encourage further cross-departmental, discipline based review processes.
- The panel recommend that the programme team consider offering some larger modules (e.g. 10 ECTS modules) within a semester e.g. Strategic Management.
- The panel recommend that the programme team should ensure that ongoing CPD and professional training is available to staff.
- The panel recommend that the programme team ensure Excel is adequately addressed in the relevant IT modules.

4.10 Assessment Strategies

Consideration for the panel:	Have appropriate programme assessment strategies been provided for the proposed programme (as outlined in the QQI/HETAC Assessment and Guidelines, 2009)?
Overall Finding:	Yes

Assessment strategies are required in line with HETAC's Assessment and Standards and should be considered by the programme EPRG. See (HETAC (2009) Assessment and Standards, Section 4.6.1, page 33). Accordingly the assessment strategy should address the following (See (HETAC (2009) Assessment and Standards, Section 2.2.5, page 13) :

- Description and Rationale for the choice of assessment tasks, criteria and procedures. This should address fairness and consistency, specifically their validity, reliability and authenticity;
- Describe any special regulations;
- Regulate, build upon and integrate the module assessment strategies;
- Provide contingent strategy for cases where learners claim exemption from modules, including recognition of prior learning;
- Ensure the programme's continuous assessment workload is appropriately balanced;
- Relate to the learning and teaching strategy;
- Demonstrate how grading criteria will be developed to relate to the Institutional grading system.

Recommendation(s):
- The panel recommend that the programme team ensure that individual feedback is received in respect of continuous assessment (including presentations) of all modules and consider opportunities for integrated and cross-modular assessment – (for example – integrated software package).

4.11 Resource Requirements

Consideration for the panel:	Does the Institute possess the resources and facilities necessary to deliver the proposed programme?
Overall Finding:	Yes

4.12 Research Activity

Consideration for the panel:	Evidence that Learning & Teaching is informed by research? Number of staff engaged in institutional/pedagogical research?
Overall Finding:	Yes

Recommendation(s):
- The panel recommend that the programme team should encourage development of formal research activity in the accountancy discipline.

4.13 Quality Assurance

Consideration for the panel:	Does the proposed programme demonstrate how the Institute's quality assurance procedures (QAF) have been applied and that satisfactory procedures exist for the on-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes?
Overall Finding:	Yes

4.14 Internationalisation

Consideration for the panel:	Does the proposed programme demonstrate how the syllabi represent an international dimension? Is there evidence of approaches to induct international students?
Overall Finding:	Yes

It was noted that International students come into this programme in Year 2 and Year 3. Some time ago International students came to college and their English was poor. In the past number of years the students have been exceptional English speakers. Mapping is a challenge, but the department are working on it.

It was noted that this year's group is exceptional as there were many different nationalities registered for the programme in Galway.

4.15 Professional Practice (Work Experience / Internships etc)

Consideration for the panel:	Does the proposed programme incorporate professional practice as per the Institute's policy on professional practice (PP)? If not, is there evidence that PP is under consideration by the programme board?
Overall Finding:	Yes

Recommendation(s):
- The panel recommend that the programme team consider offering a short placement/work experience as an accredited elective or optional module.

5.0 Module-Level Findings: General

The panel noted that all modules are mandatory. Notwithstanding the constraints imposed by achieving professional body exemptions, the programme team should consider offering some electives / choice for the students.

Recommendation(s):
- The panel recommend that the programme team should consider including computerised accounts in year 3. This could be addressed through continuous assessments in other modules in year 3.
- The panel recommend that the programme team ensure entrepreneurship is included in the programme or formally embedded through continuous assessment in relevant modules – for example Project Management and Strategic Management
- The panel recommend that the programme team review the titling of current modules and more away from 'subject 1,2,3 etc.'
- The panel noted that the institute has introduced a new module 'learning and innovation skills'. The delivery of this module needs to be relevant to all students, including through the use of integrated assessment.

5.1 Module Assessment Strategies

Consideration for the panel:	Have appropriate module assessment strategies been included in each Module Descriptor?
Overall Finding:	Yes

5.2 Module Level-Findings: Specific Named Modules

6.0 Student Findings

1 Year 2 student presented.

He found this course very good. He and 13 others transferred over after 2 years of business which eased them into this programme nicely. Students who came from outside found it harder to settle in – it was a bigger jump for them. He found that everything on this programme ties in better together – which he didn't find in business.

He knew what he wanted this time having started 8 years ago and dropping out. He felt he was too young at the time. He always had an interest in accountancy and struggled with the theory side of business.

He found the presentation on law would have been better if it was based around an essay. Feedback in the area could have been better and would have been beneficial. Collective feedback is good, but it is not in all modules.

He doesn't feel that work experience is practical for this programme. Accountancy firms would want qualified confident employees which he isn't yet. Time would be taken up training in students who were not qualified.

Some modules are shared, but this can be difficult as there are several different levels attending. In relation to 10 credit modules – he found the first semester before Christmas is very rushed and compact, having a 10 credit module after Christmas would free up a bit of time. In relation to resources this student would like more face to face time with Excel. Moodle was used by some lecturers to upload notes etc.

Regarding mandatory modules he was happy with the way it is at the moment and is still deciding what route to take. More computer accounting packages and advanced Excel would be very beneficial.

This student did not like the learning to learn module. He understood the need, concept and rationale, but he didn't like it. Many students didn't attend. Maybe a different structure would help. His particular year was made up of approx. 50/50 leaving cert and mature students.

7.0 Stakeholder Engagement

8.0 Future Plans

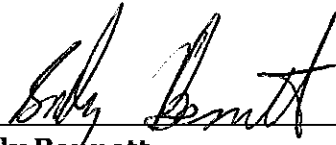|	
Consideration for the panel:	Evidence that the programme board considered and identified opportunities and signalled proposals for related new programme and award development.
Overall Finding:	Yes

Recommendation(s):
- The panel recommend that the programme team ensure entrepreneurship is included in the programme or formally embedded through continuous assessment in relevant modules – for example (Project Management and Strategic Management).

Validation Panel Report Approved By:

Signed:

Billy Bennett
Chairperson.

Date: _24 April 2015._