

# External Peer Review Group Report



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

<b>Named Award:</b>	Bachelor of Science (Honours)
<b>Programme Title(s):</b>	BSc Honours Forensic Science & Analysis BSc Forensic Science & Analysis Higher Certificate in Forensic Science & Analysis
<b>Exit Award(s):</b>	Higher Certificate in Forensic Science & Analysis
<b>Award Type:</b>	Honours Degree, Ordinary Degree, Higher Certificate
<b>Award Class:</b>	Major
<b>NFQ Level:</b>	Level 6, Level 7 and Level 8,
<b>ECTS / ACCS Credits:</b>	120, 180, 240
<b>Location:</b>	Galway
<b>Minor Award(s):</b>	SPA – Certificate in Science in Medical Device Technology L6 SPA – Certificate in Science in Instrumentation L6

### Panel Members

Name	Position	Organisation
John Cusack	Chairperson	AIT
Gerry Talbot	Secretary	GMIT
Dr Sean Reidy	IOT Member	AIT
Prof John Corish	University Member	TCD
Dr Donal Coveney	Professional Practitioner	TopChem Pharmaceuticals Ltd
Tara Westby	Institute Graduate	

### Programme Board Team

Seamus Lennon	Rachel Gargan
John Keary	Seamus O'Donnell
Jean Hughes	Ita Kelly
Emer Quirke	Des Foley
Aoife Malone	
Colin Conway	
Gay Keaveney	

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## 1 Introduction

The following report to Academic Council is a validation panel report from an expert panel of assessors on BSc (Honours) Forensic Science and Analysis

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

As the Programme is still in transition, it is recommended extending for resubmission for panel adjudicate in autumn 2015, for the sept 2016 intake (as two graduate cohorts by then)

Note: slight disadvantage as no graduates as yet in terms of jobs

The panel are agreeing the current changes.

Condition:

1. Title and focus of programme requires consideration and review – harmonise more with the course content
2. Formal involvement from students and wider stakeholder engagement and participation from external stakeholders in relation to the programme design implementation

This course has one of the highest points in the whole institute. The retention rate is not seen as an issue; the ones lost were due to transferring to other courses. The feedback from industry following work placement was that students were excellent and very high achievers.

It is a condition of the panel, that due to the high chemistry content in the programme (approx. 70%) and only 30% forensics, that the title needs to be reviewed. It is recommended that feedback from industry is essential.

The lack of job analysis was a concern, in terms of the job market, although employment is primarily in QA/QC roles.

It was also noted that the Special Purpose Award Certificate in Science, Medical Device Technology, Level 6 (Springboard Course) has had very positive feedback, and in fact was life changing for some. The course is aimed at people who wish to work at operator level and come from a variety of backgrounds. Of the 22 students who completed the course, over half have got full time employment. Funding is available to run this course again. Development for students in terms of personal development, soft skills, and academic writing is excellent. In addition there is support from the careers office in terms of CV writing, and interview skills.

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The Special Purpose Award Certificate in Science Instrumentations unfortunately has not been run yet as funding has been rejected twice by the HEA.

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

## **Bachelor of Science (Honours) Forensic Science and Analysis.**

*Place an x in the correct box.*

Accredited for the next five academic years or until the next programmatic review, whichever occurs sooner	
Accredited for extending for resubmission for panel adjudicate in autumn 2015	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). In this report, the term Condition is used to indicate an action or amendment which in the view of the EPRG must be undertaken prior to the commencement of the programme. Conditions are mandatory if the programme is to be approved. 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)

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## 4.1 Reflection, including internal and external engagement

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

### Commendation(s):

- The programme board on getting the course up and running.
- High retention rate
- Research good, lots of publications

### Condition(s):

- The title and focus of the programme requires consideration and review, it needs to be harmonised more with the course content.
- Formal involvement from students and wider stakeholder engagement, together with participation from external stakeholders in relation to the programme design implementation.

### Recommendation(s):

- Revisit the SER as the panel feel that it could be strengthened further.
- Ensure the learning outcomes accurately represent the modules.
- Further research is required in relation to the potential job market, and prospects, add in staff profiles and any staff publications.
- Produce an assessment / exam matrix. Ensure a balanced approach to assessments.
- Review the organic chemical modules and tailor it to be more relevant to problems encountered in modern forensic environment.
- Encourage to continue research among staff and students and think about ways that they can get involved with it more, for example using links to industry.
- Review the content of the legal studies module and if it can be incorporated into other modules.
- Recognition from 3<sup>rd</sup> year marks in 4<sup>th</sup> year to take some of the pressure off in 4<sup>th</sup> year.
- Review the equipment especially specific equipment available for forensic science modules.
- Review the learning to learn module in terms of the referencing aspect.

## 4.2 Demand

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

## 4.3 Award

<i>Consideration for the panel:</i>	Is the level and type of the award appropriate?
<i>Overall Finding:</i>	Yes

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**Commendation(s):**

- None

**Condition(s):**

- Title and focus of programme requires consideration and review – harmonise more with the course content

**Recommendation(s):**

- None.

## 4.4 Entry Requirements

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

## 4.5 Access, Transfer and Progression

<i>Consideration for the panel:</i>	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?
<i>Overall Finding:</i>	Yes

Note: There is an option to take students from other colleges into year 2 or 3, however at capacity at the moment. They have also benchmarked against other colleges for example Sligo IT and Wolverhampton University in terms of looking at what subjects they do. The programme board are currently looking at a student exchange with Wolverhampton University.

## 4.6 Retention

<i>Consideration for the panel:</i>	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?
<i>Overall Finding:</i>	Yes

**Commendation(s):**

- High retention rate

**Condition(s):**

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- None.

### Recommendation(s):

- Review the learning to learn module in terms of the referencing aspect as Harvard referencing is seen as crucial.

### 4.7 Standards and Outcomes

<i>Consideration for the panel:</i>	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)?
<i>Overall Finding:</i>	Yes

The awards standards requirements for programmes on the NFQ Framework can be found at [http://www.hetac.ie/publications\\_pol01.htm](http://www.hetac.ie/publications_pol01.htm)

Note:

As the Programme is still in transition, it is recommended extending for resubmission for panel adjudicate in autumn 2015, for the sept 2016 intake.

The SPA Certificate in medical device technology is running again, as yet the SPA Certificate in Science Instrumentation is not due to lack of funding. It is prepared just waiting for delivery.

### 4.8 Programme Structure

<i>Consideration for the panel:</i>	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?
<i>Overall Finding:</i>	Yes

### Commendation(s):

- None

### Condition(s):

- None.

### Recommendation(s):

- Ensure the learning outcomes accurately represent the modules.

### 4.9 Learning and Teaching Strategies

<i>Consideration for the panel:</i>	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?
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<i>Overall Finding:</i>	Yes
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### 4.10 Assessment Strategies

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

#### **Commendation(s):**

- None

#### **Condition(s):**

- None.

#### **Recommendation(s):**

- Produce an assessment / exam matrix. Ensure a balanced approach to assessments

### 4.11 Resource Requirements

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

#### **Commendation(s):**

- None

#### **Condition(s):**

- None.

#### **Recommendation(s):**

- Lacking forensics equipment, a comparison microscope would enhance their learning

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Note:

- Produce a manufacturing lab, relatively cheap to produce approx. €10,000.
- Ideally would like newer versions of the equipment, some local companies give their equipment if they are upgrading; there is an avenue to develop relationships in terms of stronger collaboration.

### 4.12 Research Activity

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

#### Commendation(s):

- Research good, lots of publications

#### Condition(s):

- None.

#### Recommendation(s):

- Encourage to continue research among staff and students and think about ways that they can get involved with it more, for example using links to industry.

### 4.13 Quality Assurance

<i>Consideration for the panel:</i>	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?
<i>Overall Finding:</i>	Yes

### 4.14 Internationalisation

<i>Consideration for the panel:</i>	Does the proposed programme demonstrate how the syllabi represent an international dimension? Is there evidence of approaches to induct international students?
<i>Overall Finding:</i>	No

Note: There doesn't appear to be any evidence of an international dimension as yet.

### 4.15 Professional Practice (Work Experience / Internships etc)

<i>Consideration for the panel:</i>	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?
<i>Overall Finding:</i>	Yes



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Notes: The feedback from industry following work placement was that students were excellent and very high achievers. Their work placement tends to be in industries like the Marine institute, DNA analysis, Teagasc and Food research labs. The programme board confirmed that they have some new companies this year, and some students did research in the UK also. The work placement is assessed; students keep a log of their work, and what they got out of it. It also includes a site visit and students do a presentation. It seems to be working well and the feedback is good.

## 5.0 Module-Level Findings: General

The programme has proposed some changes to the modules which have been approved.

### Commendation(s):

- None

### Condition(s):

- None.

### Recommendation(s):

- Ensure the learning outcomes accurately represent the modules.
- Review the organic chemical modules and tailor it to be more relevant to problems encountered in modern forensic environment.
- Review the content of the legal studies module and if it can be incorporated into other modules.

## 5.1 Module Assessment Strategies

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

### Commendation(s):

- None

### Condition(s):

- None.

### Recommendation(s):

- Ensure the learning outcomes accurately represent the modules.

## 6.0 Student Findings

One mature student gave feedback, who had recently completed the course. The student felt that the prospectus needed to be updated in that the content does not sell the course enough. The student also felt that the feedback from the class in general would be the same. The module on the Irish legal system was seen to be irrelevant. The student felt that there could be more industry related modules, and that 3 years of computer forensics was too much. There should be more manufacturing, more sterile filling and more validation.

There should also be more of a focus on interview skills, CV preparation and presentation skills. There was good engagement between staff and students. Fourth year was very

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pressurised especially as all exam marks counted for fourth year only, felt this should be reviewed.

Overall the student was very happy with the experience and would recommend the course and the college and felt that the course fulfilled and exceeded expectations.

### 7.0 Stakeholder Engagement

Note the condition below.

**Commendation(s):**

- None

**Condition(s):**

- Formal involvement from students and wider stakeholder engagement, together with participation from external stakeholders in relation to the programme design implementation.

**Recommendation(s):**

- None.

### 8.0 Future Plans

In light of the fact that the programme is still in transition, it is a condition of the panel to extend for resubmission for panel adjudicate in autumn 2015. The course content and title need to be more aligned and formal engagement from students and industry is required. The proposed module changes have been approved.

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

**Validation Panel Report Approved By:**

**Signed:**

  
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John Cusack  
Chairperson

**Date:**

28/04/2015