



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

Named Award:	Bachelor of Business Bachelor of Arts
Programme Title(s):	Bachelor of Business (Honours) in Accounting Bachelor of Arts in Accounting & Financial Management
Exit Award(s):	Higher Certificate in Business
Award Type:	Degree & Honours Degree
Award Class:	Major
NFQ Level:	Level 8 Level 7
ECTS / ACCS Credits:	240, 180
Location:	Mayo
Minor Award(s):	None

Panel Members

Name	Position	Organisation
Billy Bennett	Chair	LYIT
Larry Elwood	Secretary	GMIT
Damien Courtney	IOT Member	CIT
Chris Barry	University Member	NUIG
Tom Canavan	Professional Practitioner	Self Employed/Semi-Retired
Lorraine Lavelle	Institute Graduate	PricewaterhouseCoopers

Programme Board Team

Janine Mc Ginn	Deaglan O'Riain	David Cashman
Michael Gill	Celene Dunphy	Brian Mulhern
Shane Byrne	Declan Hoban	Egbert Polski
Caroline Clarke	Jessica Lysaght	Niamh Hearn
Hugh McBride	Clodagh Geraghty	Deirdre Garvey
Maria Daly		

1 Introduction

The following report to Academic Council is a validation panel report from an expert panel of assessors on the approval of the above programmes

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

The panel congratulated the Programme Boards for the impressive, clear and strong layout of their SER document.

After discussions the panel have decided to approve the programmes with no conditions, some recommendations and commendations. The campus underwent Programmatic Review two years ago and the most recent review was conducted again to synchronise with all programmes across the Institute.

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

Bachelor of Arts in Accounting & Financial Management and 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 revised programme document that take 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 Boards 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

<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 panel commend the Programme Board Teams on the Quality of the SER documentation.
- The panel commend the Programme Board Teams on the range of assessment methodologies employed across modules. The Panel also noted the issue of timely feedback on continuous assessments, an issue that has been addressed in recent years. The panel also noted that students all receive assessment schedules at the beginning of the year, which is particularly relevant for award years.
- The Panel noted that the Department has already undergone a Programmatic Review in 2012, but has nonetheless made proposals for further changes.
- The SER document has clearly identified for the panel, challenges, including changes in learner profile and declining numbers on some programmes.

Recommendation(s):

- The panel recommend the development of an ab initio L8 programme in parallel with L7 entry. This development should take note of similar offerings, including offerings on the Galway campus and in the proposed CUA collaboration.

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

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

Commendation(s):

- The panel commend the Programme Board Teams engagement with students who come in to this programme after completing the Foundation Course. This seems very successful and prepares students for college learning, some having been out of education for a period of time.

Recommendation(s):

- The panel recommend that collectively the Institute and Department should attempt to increase entry by making efforts including:
 - Increasing school visits
 - Establish relationships with business leaders
 - Open days
 - Develop and determine identifiable needs for the Mayo campus and specifically for its accounting programmes.

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

Recommendation(s):

- The panel recommend that the department should develop minor awards and special purpose awards to meet the continuing professional development needs of the region.
- The panel strongly recommends the programme board ensure that access, transfer and progression practices adhere to GMIT and National policies, specifying appropriate entry points.
- The panel recommend that language options be made available to students on the programme.

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

The Programme Boards believe the small class sizes are a very positive element in this programme. They operate an open door policy and tutors are assigned by specific years.

Counsellors, chaplains and workshops are available and staff are very much aware of the student needs and provide learning support. Students are requested to do an exit interview if they leave before the end of the course. Findings from these interviews generally related to difficulties of Finance, Health or just being on the wrong course.

Commendation(s):

- The panel commend the programme boards on the retention initiatives currently in place, including: induction, withdrawal form, exit interview and tutor system.

Recommendation(s):

- The Panel recommend that further retention analysis be undertaken (for example, analysis of time of year and reasons for leaving).

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

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):

- The panel commend the programme boards on the structure of both programmes reviewed.
- The panel commend the programme boards on the extent of module sharing, and the common first year model adopted.

Recommendation(s):

- The panel recommend the introduction of the new Work Experience module. The programme teams should adopt or adapt a detailed work experience manual or handbook to support this development. It was noted that the Erasmus work placement module also offers useful opportunities in this regard. Consider extending the pilot to become a core part of programmes.

- Following the panel meeting with the student group, The panel recommends that the module Taxation 1 be mandatory at a minimum and students who wished to deepen their knowledge of tax could then take Taxation 2 if they wished. On meeting the team at the end of the review structural/course design, issues were raised by them in relation to this matter.
- Following the panel meeting with the student group, they felt they were excessively exposed to web design content on the MIS Module, and did not see themselves requiring this skill set and would have preferred the module to concentrate on more “core” MIS material which they see as being more professionally relevant.

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?
<i>Overall Finding:</i>	Yes

E-Learning is very evident – Moodle is used throughout the college on most courses. The Panel encourage the use of Moodle to support learning and enhance student feedback.

Commendation(s):

- The panel commend the programme boards on the level of engagement they had with the panel which was conducted in a spirit of enhancement and collaboration.

Recommendation(s):

- The panel recommends a review of the Accounting IT/Software packages being taught on the programme. These should be expanded further – e.g. (ROS Online, Sage Suite).

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.

The 1st year students were happy with the break-down for requirements between continuous assessments and exams, the time allocated and the percentage allocated.

Award Year students, however, expressed a desire for more study time nearer exam times rather than trying to meet continuous assessment deadlines on top of their study workload.

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

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

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>	Yes

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

Recommendation(s):

- The panel strongly support the introduction of the new Work Experience module. The programme teams should adopt or adapt a detailed work experience manual or handbook to support this development. It was noted that the Erasmus work placement module also offers useful opportunities in this regard.

5.0 Module-Level Findings: General

Overall findings of the panel should be documented here.

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

5.2 Module Level-Findings: Specific Named Modules

5.2.1 Module (MIS)

Recommendation(s):

- The panel recommend a change in the title of the MIS module to reflect the universal use of information systems by all knowledge workers and not just management, (e.g., Contemporary Issues in I.S.)

5.2.2 Module (Web Design)

Recommendation(s):

- The panel recommend that the programme board consider changing the development content in the web design module and replacing it with practical skills in a content management system (CMS).

6.0 Student Findings

5 Students –

On the whole the students who presented to the review panel expressed themselves to be satisfied with programme as they had experienced it.

1. The students were very happy to get an assessment schedule at the beginning of the year – they had a clear guidance in the hand-out.
2. They were happy with the break-down for requirements between continuous assessments and exam time allocated and the percentage allocated
3. If a student was having difficulty making a deadline with a continuous assessment they could approach the Class Rep who would make representations for another week – usually very receptive.
4. When asked about assessment they said that they were mostly well prepared in most areas. However, the students all agreed that the biggest gap they encountered in the workplace was the lack of practice on the Sage suite of packages. Additionally those students who presented felt that continuous assessments in 4th year are very pressurised. They suggest it is difficult to get through all the continuous assessments and study as well, especially in the last two weeks.

Finally the students suggested the following proposed improvements should be incorporated into the programme(s) :-

1. That Work Placement should be mandatory as it is in all other programmes.
2. That taxation should be a mandatory module and have a language, as an elective. They pointed out that in 4th year you cannot take a language which could cause a problem for some prospective employees who look for level 8 graduates with a language.

7.0 Stakeholder Engagement


8.0 Future Plans

Overall findings of the panel should be documented here.

<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:



Billy Bennett,
Chairperson.

Date:

24 April 2015.