



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

Named Award:	Bachelor of Science (Hons)
Programme Title(s):	BSc (Honours) Medical Science L8 (4 years)
Exit Award(s):	Higher Certificate in Science
Award Type:	Honours Degree and Higher Certificate
Award Class:	Major
NFQ Level:	Level 6 and Level 8
ECTS / ACCS Credits:	120, and 240
Location:	Galway
Minor Award(s):	N/A

Panel Members

Name	Position	Organisation
Michael Hall	Chairperson	IT, Tralee
Carmel Brennan	Secretary	GMIT
Dr Brigid Lucey	IOT Member	CIT
Prof John Cornish	University Member	TCD
Dr John Williams	Professional Practitioner	HSE, Sligo
Alla Skorobogatova	Institute Graduate	

Programme Board Team

Dr Des Foley	Dr Debbie Corcoran
Dr Seamus Lennon	Dr Joan O'Keefe
Dr Eleanor Rainsford	Mary McGrath
Dr Mary Ui Mhuircheartaigh	Terri Muldoon
Yvonne Slattery	
Dr Emer Quirke	
Dr Declan Maher	

1 Introduction

The following report to Academic Council is the report of the Expert Panel on its review, as part of the Institutes Programmatic Review, of the Self-Evaluation Report and meetings with programme delivery teams in relation to the following programmes:

- BSc (Hons) Medical Science

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

Following its review of the Self-Evaluation Report and its meetings with the Department, the Programmatic Review Expert Review Panel has recommended the programme for revalidation.

Feedback from the panel was that the Self Evaluation document was well presented; there was excellent engagement with the panel and questions were well answered. The team were seen as vibrant and energetic, with an obvious ability to develop this discipline. A high level of programme development was evident as was interest in continually improving the programme.

Student feedback in terms of work placement was that it was an important part of the programme, as was the research project. The continued availability of placement is imperative and needs to be confirmed prior to programme expansion. In addition, the breadth and depth of student experiences on placements needs to continue to be managed. The presence of the PASS student mentoring scheme on this programme is proving beneficial to students.

The panel noted that there are a number of possibilities in terms of future programme offerings including Masters Programmes, Postgraduate Diplomas, and CPD modules. Student awareness of career and postgraduate options needs to be further enhanced.

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) Medical Science

Place an x in the correct box.

Accredited for the next five academic years or until the next programmatic review, whichever occurs sooner	
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Accredited subject to conditions and/or 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). 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)

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):

- Lecturers were very engaged with this programme and have an obvious ability to develop this discipline further in GMIT.
- There was evidence of high quality of programme development and an interest shown in continually improving the programme.

Note: The “meet the medical scientists morning”, whereby graduates come back to talk to students before they go on placement is seen as beneficial.

Condition(s):

- None.

Recommendation(s):

- Show where and how stakeholder feedback was incorporated, (or not as the case may be), into proposals for changes.

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

Commendation(s):

- Lecturers are very engaged, with an obvious ability to develop this discipline.
- High quality of programme development and interest in continually improving the programme
- A good relationship with the placements hospitals was also commendable.

Condition(s):

- None.

Recommendation(s):

- Given the changing face of the sector and laboratory medical science, the longer term strategy of the course needs to be considered in terms of graduate and market demand. Graduate opportunities should be considered in future planning, and the year 1 intake should be limited by the number of available clinical placements.

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

Note:

- Trends in points appear to be consistent.

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

Commendation(s):

- None

Condition(s):

- None.

Recommendation(s):

- Introduce and expand the schools CPD programme portfolio for external stakeholders.

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):

- None

Condition(s):

- None.

Recommendation(s):

- The Programme Board should note the attrition rate of students in year 2 and consider possible interventions which might mitigate against this.

Note: The Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS) has aided in the improvement of communication, leadership and presentation skills.

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?
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	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

Commendation(s):

- None

Condition(s):

- None.

Recommendation(s):

- Consider developing an additional exit award for students who leave after second year e.g. a Higher Certificate for laboratory aids.

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):

- Clarify special regulations on the APS in relation to failed elements. Specify that the requirement is that continuous assessment and final examinations must be passed and not each individual examinable element.
- Review the credits allocated to modules versus hours listed on the Approved Programme Schedules. Credits should, with reasonable consistency, reflect the number of hour's effort (including contact hours) in a module.
- Healthcare Structures lectures should be moved into the Quality Management module in year 3.

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

4.10 Assessment Strategies

<i>Consideration for</i>	Have appropriate programme assessment strategies been provided for
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<i>the panel:</i>	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):

- Clarify special regulations where by continuous assessment and final exam must be passed and not each individual examinable element.

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):

- As it may not be feasible to have every possible facility or piece of equipment, site visits are encouraged. A site visit early in the programme would give students a better understanding of what they are studying.

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):

- None.

Condition(s):

- None.

Recommendation(s):

- There is a need to be more proactive in relation to research activities, and it is suggested that the School's research activities could be developed by engaging with the region's hospitals, Local HEI's and the Institute's own research centres e.g. GMIT's marine research centre. In addition, where possible, strategic use of the student's 4th year projects should be used to develop research activities. There is a need to be proactive on the research activities.

Note: Staff are very willing to engage in research and currently engage with practitioners in NUIG/ HSE.

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

Note: There have been no International students on this programme in the last five years. There is an interest from international students, particularly from Middle East countries, who are primarily interested in the work placement. As a lot of international students use science as a springboard for medicine, this may create an opportunity for a niche programme without clinical placement.

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

Commendation(s):

- There appears to be a good relationship with staff and the placement hospitals.

Condition(s):

- None.

Recommendation(s):

- In clinical placement, ensure that each student has a reasonably similar breadth of experience of the work place and of laboratory techniques. There may be a need for greater interaction between the Institute and placement site to ensure uniform experiences for the students.
- It is suggested that the clinical programmes should be embedded with the hospitals by establishing a “Memorandum of Understanding” which should strengthen the commitment of the West North West Hospital Group (WNWHG) to the programme, and their provision of work placements.

5.0 Module-Level Findings: General

In relation to the modules, the panel suggest that there is a review of some modules in terms of commonalities, and try to amalgamate where possible.

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. Student Findings

Students who had recently just completed their final year took part in the feedback. In general, all felt qualified to do the job they wanted to do. Work placement in some instances didn't match student expectations, and they felt that they didn't get as much experience as they had hoped. They felt the work experience could be improved by a clearer work placement plan coordinated between the Institute and the work placement provider.

They also would have liked more exposure to laboratories, and suggested that it would have helped if someone external, who worked in a laboratory, gave them a talk or demonstration. Students were surprised when they went to a Lab at how automated it was. They also felt that the level of chemistry in the programme was not necessary.

The students also suggested the inclusion of academic referencing and word in scientific communication in year 2. They felt that if there was a postgraduate programme available in GMIT that they like to continue their studies in GMIT.

7.0 Stakeholder Engagement

Practitioners, graduates and students were consulted during the Programmatic Review process.

8.0 Future Plans

Consideration needs to be given to future planning in terms of graduate / market demands, particularly in relation to the work placement, to keep in line with the changing face of laboratory science.

<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

Commendation(s):

- Staff are very interested in developing this programme, and onwards.

Condition(s):

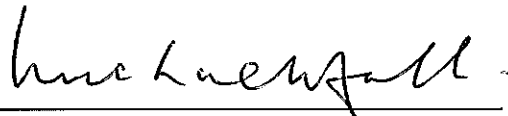
- None.

Recommendation(s):

- None.

Validation Panel Report Approved By:

Signed:



Michael Hall
Chairperson

Date:

24 April 2015