



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

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| Named Award: | Bachelor of Science (Honours), |
| Programme Title(s): | BSc (Hons) in Furniture Design and Manufacture L8 (4 Years) BSc (Hons) in Furniture Design and Manufacture - 1 Year add-on BSc in Furniture Design and Manufacture L7 (3 Years) BSc (Hons) in Furniture and Wood Technology, L8 (4 years) BSc (Hons) in Furniture and Wood Technology - (1 Year add-on) BSc in Furniture and Wood Technology L7 (3 years) |
| Exit Award(s): | Higher Certificate in Engineering in Furniture Design and Manufacture Higher Certificate in Engineering in Furniture and Wood Technology |
| Award Type: | Honours Degree, Ordinary Degree and Higher Certificate |
| Award Class: | Major |
| NFQ Level: | Level 6, Level 7, Level 8 |
| ECTS / ACCS Credits: | 120, 180, 240 |
| Location: | Letterfrack |
| Minor Award(s): | N/A |

Panel Members

| Name | Position | Organisation |
|----------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| Dr Joe McGarry | Chairperson | Castel Education |
| Cait Noone | Secretary | GMIT |
| Colin Deevy | IOT Member | Carlow IT |
| Adam De Eyto | University Member | UL |
| John Kinahan | Professional Practitioner | Redwood Design Limited |
| Gerry Doherty | Professional Practitioner | High-Tech Machinery Ltd |
| David Monson | Institute Graduate | Monson Irish Jewellery |
| Russell Jacob | Institute Graduate | Joseph Walsh Workshop |

Programme Board Team

| | | |
|---------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Mr Dermot O'Donovan | Mr Paul Leamy | Dr Susan Rogers |
| Mr Anthony Clare | Mr Jeremy Madden | Dr Patrick Tobin |
| Dr Kate Dunne | Mr Kevin Maye | Mr Sean Treacy |

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|------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| Ms Ann Foley | Mr Hugh Mullan | Mr Finian Sheridan |
| Mr Sean Garvey | Dr Marion Mc Garry | Mr Andrew Newland |
| Mr Desmond Kelly | Ms Marian Mulligan | |
| Mr Davin Larkin | Ms Geraldine O'Brien | |

1 Introduction

The following report to Academic Council is a validation panel report from an expert panel of assessors on BSc. in Furniture Design and Manufacture Level 7 and Level 8 and BSc in Furniture and Wood Technology, Level 7 and Level 8.

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 above programmes have been approved with no conditions and some recommendations which will be outlined later in the report.

The Programme Board was commended on the very high retention rate, and the fact that they have recently been awarded the green flag status on the waste theme. Sustainability has also been introduced to the programme where appropriate. It was also evident that there is a culture of Health & Safety and Sustainability throughout the programme.

The work placement was seen as extremely beneficial, and a huge learning curve for the students with approximately 30% going on international placements. There appears to be good engagement with industries both nationally and internationally. The students work was seen to be of a superb standard, with a unique skillset displayed.

Both programmes appear to be equal in terms of success in future careers. The importance of quickly identifying students who are struggling was also noted in this regard.

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) in Furniture Design and Manufacture and Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Furniture and Wood Technology

Place an x in the correct box.

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| 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

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| <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):

- Strength of the team in terms of enthusiasm, quality of teaching and learning, breadth of knowledge, focus on development, and the leadership that is provided by the Head of Department.
- High Retention Rate
- Green Flag Status on the theme of waste
- Culture of Health & Safety and Sustainability.
- Interdisciplinary research projects amongst staff within different departments of GMIT.

Condition(s):

- None.

Recommendation(s):

- Review the distribution of the Continuous Assessment weightings and the distribution of the workload across the different modules. Ensure that credits are equitable and fair.
- Review the access to materials, and make students aware of the potential cost for extra material. In addition review the materials procurement system.
- Review the access to computer facilities, software and workshops including non-machine room. Review the library opening times
- Review the mandatory only approach to modules – consider limited electives.
- Develop Research Capacity given staff expertise for both national and international research.
- Review the alignment of modules. Develop a visual diagram for each year of the programme to illustrate module commonality.
- The ERPG welcomed the inclusion of the entrepreneurship and tendering modules and suggested that it would be nurtured and further developed.
- Consider that the area of Project Planning be introduced earlier in the programme.

4.2 Demand

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| <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):

- None

Condition(s):

- None.

Recommendation(s):

- None.

Note: Generally students who are interested in woodwork in school apply. There is also a promotional DVD which aims to explain the difference between the two programmes. In addition, open days are also held and is communicated in schools as much as possible.

4.3 Award

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

Commendation(s):

- None

Condition(s):

- None.

Recommendation(s):

- None.

4.4 Entry Requirements

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| <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):

- None

Condition(s):

- None.

Recommendation(s):

- None.

Note: The Programme Board at present opted not to offer a level 9 option as they believed that the demand was not there, in addition, the Level 8 ab-initio programmes have just recently been introduced they want to monitor the demand for this.

4.5 Access, Transfer and Progression

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| <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):

- None.

Note: Transfer between the two courses is minimum and is facilitated where applicable.

4.6 Retention

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| <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):

- Very High Retention Rate

Condition(s):

- None.

Recommendation(s):

- None.

4.7 Standards and Outcomes

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| <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

Commendation(s):

- None

Condition(s):

- None.

Recommendation(s):

- None.

4.8 Programme Structure

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| <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):

- Review the mandatory approach – Consider limited electives.
- Review the alignment of modules. Develop a visual diagram for each year of the programme to illustrate module commonality.

4.9 Learning and Teaching Strategies

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| <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 |

Commendation(s):

- None

Condition(s):

- None.

Recommendation(s):

- None.

Note: Students are encouraged to visit local businesses in terms of self-directed learning. Industry trips now form part of continuous assessment whereby they have to report their findings.

4.10 Assessment Strategies

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| <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):

- Review the distribution of the continuous assessments and the credit weightings across the different modules. Ensure that credits are equitable and fair.
- Review the alignment of modules. Develop a visual diagram for each year of the programme to illustrate module commonality.
- Suggest a template for continuous assessments whereby a standard format is used, clearly outlining assessment criteria in terms of weighting, marks and expectations.

Note: Students are encouraged to visit local businesses in terms of self-directed learning. Industry trips now form part of continuous assessment whereby they have to report their findings.

4.11 Resource Requirements

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| <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):

- Review the access to materials, and make students aware of the potential cost of extra material. In addition review the materials procurement system available.
- Review the access to computer facilities, software and workshops including non-machine room. It is recommended that access to workshops outside of regular hours should be communicated to students. Review the library timetables

Note: More industry site visits are recommended but the panel is mindful of the resource issue involved.

4.12 Research Activity

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| <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):

- A number of staff continues to work with staff in the main campus in terms of research.

Condition(s):

- None.

Recommendation(s):

- Develop Research Capacity as there appears to be the knowledge and expertise to engage nationally and internationally. Possibly even locally with NUIG and Coillte.

Note: Funding is an issue

4.13 Quality Assurance

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| <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? |
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| <i>Overall Finding:</i> | Yes |
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Commendation(s):

- None

Condition(s):

- None.

Recommendation(s):

- None.

4.14 Internationalisation

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| <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 |

Commendation(s):

- None

Condition(s):

- None.

Recommendation(s):

- Consider reviewing US contacts and develop and nurture opportunities.

Note:

- There are international students, and up to 30% of students here are placed internationally for their work placement. There appears to be good engagement with industries internationally.
- There is an opportunity to invite postgraduate students to study on campus who could be available for mentoring and laboratory supervision, this may free up mainstream staff hours.

4.15 Professional Practice (Work Experience / Internships etc)

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| <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):

- None

Condition(s):

- None.

Recommendation(s):

- None.

Note: The work placement was seen as extremely beneficial, and a huge learning curve for the students with 30% going on international placements. There appears to be good engagement with industries both nationally and internationally. Prior to placement a “wish list” of what students would like in their work placement in considered, together with their strengths and weaknesses. This is then revisited after the work placement. The intention is for the student to use their skills in the relevant area.

5.0 Module-Level Findings: General

There have been a number of module changes, which have been approved, however there has been a significant change to the design modules, in terms of adding Photoshop, e-portfolio, as a result furniture history and design module have been integrated. There is also now a strong link in year 2 to professional design module in year 4, where students create a design that is fit for industry. The introduction of digital media in 2nd year is another major change.

In relation to the design element, it was noted by the panel that the programme board be conscious not to disadvantage students in terms of the feedback, albeit it was also acknowledged that design will be more subjective than other subjects. The programme board also confirmed that they benchmark themselves against other colleges and that external designers view their work and give the students constructive feedback also.

There is now a refocus on advanced technological skills providing the student more time to understand the processes involved.

The introduction of the new BIM module in year 4 is seen as a great additional add on for students. This was based on feedback from industry as BIM is seen to be sweeping through the construction industry to which these programmes would be linked.

The name change Materials and Construction to the new module combining Materials 1 and Furniture Construction is also seen as important in terms of including more practical demonstrations.

Commendation(s):

- None

Condition(s):

- None.

Recommendation(s):

- Review the alignment of modules. Develop a visual diagram for each year of the programme to illustrate module commonality.
- Acknowledge that the Programme Board have taken on board entrepreneurship and tendering modules and suggest building and nurturing these further.
- Consider that the area project planning is more explicit earlier in the programme

5.1

Module Assessment Strategies

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

- None

Condition(s):

- None.

Recommendation(s):

- Review the alignment of modules. Develop a visual diagram for each year of the programme to illustrate module commonality.

6.0 Student Findings

Five students gave their feedback. They felt that there was a good balance between younger and mature students. Good mix of groups and small groups were seen as an advantage. It was noted that it is a very community based positive learning experience. The course content was very encouraging, the hands on element expectations had been fulfilled, also there is a good balance in terms of the academic element.

First year support from lecturers was also commendable together with the skills taught. They felt some modules overlapped a bit, like visual studies and sketching. They also felt that CAD / CAM should be introduced in first year, and felt it was more self-taught. They also felt that there should be more justification in some 5 credit modules in terms of workload.

The number of continuous assessments due at the same time was sometimes an issue, and they suggested that if they were more streamlined it would have been more beneficial.

The lack of a specific room for outside of hours was also recommended as the workshops can get quite overcrowded. In addition access to the library times were not always accurate.

Basic sketching by hand took time, so they used CAD. They found the design process excellent with lectures keeping an eye on the progress at all times. The input from the lecturer is seen as invaluable, especially in terms of how commercially viable their concepts would be. Overall the lectures were very good at giving direction.

They felt that there was a need for greater access to programme packages, broadband was an issue at times and computer labs close at 9. They also felt that they lacked exposure to different materials and in some cases they had to purchase their own.

Work placement was seen a very beneficial, and a huge learning curve for the students. Students would like more entrepreneurial type modules and would prefer more flexibility in terms of electives.

Overall the student experience was excellent and the support from lectures was excellent.

Commendation(s):

- None

Condition(s):

- None.

Recommendation(s):

- None.

7.0 Stakeholder Engagement

Note: No concerns were raised in relation to stakeholder feedback, other than to consider reviewing international contacts and develop and nurture opportunities, particularly in relation to work placement.


8.0 Future Plans

To investigate opportunities to develop modules which could be combined with existing postgraduate programmes. In addition, it is planned to further develop international links with industry.

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| <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:



Dr Joe McGarry
Chairperson.

Date: