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 Science (Honours)
Programme Title(s):	Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Digital Media & Society
Exit Award(s):	Bachelor of Science in Digital Media & Society
Award Type:	Major
Award Class:	Honours Degree
NFQ Level:	Level 8
ECTS / ACCS Credits:	180, 240
Location:	Mayo
Minor Award(s):	None

Panel Members

Name	Position	Organisation
Dermot Douglas	Chair	Higher Education Consultant
Aedin OHeocha	Secretary	GMIT
Luke Raeside	IOT Member	ITB
Paul Gormley	University Member	NUIG
Eoin Kennedy	Professional Practitioner	Eoin Kennedy Communications
Martin Quirke	Institute Graduate	Knowledge Clinic

Programme Board Team

Pearse McDonnell	Noreen Henry	Attracta Brennan
Michael Gill	Egbert Polski	Deirdre Garvey
Andrew Beatty	Janine McGinn	Sharon Boyle

1 Introduction

The following report to Academic Council is a validation panel report from an expert panel of assessors on 19th 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

This programme was first validated in October, 2012 with the first intake in September, 2013. The external panel that originally validated the programme in 2012 is to be reconvened in 2015, prior to a second cohort completing year one of the programme, "with the purpose of reviewing the pedagogical and technological methodologies employed in the teaching and learning of the programme".

In an effort to increase the programme's overall visibility on the CAO, the programme team requested the validation of a level 7 award entitled B.Sc. (Ord.) in Digital Media and Society. However, the validation of a new programme is outside the scope of this programmatic review process. The EPRG expressed concern that the development of such a programme would distract the programme team from the further development of the level 8 programme. It did not agree that the presence of a level 7 programme on the CAO would necessarily increase new student intake.

The EPRG noted the success of the programme team in developing an innovative programme and in successfully implementing the first year of the programme.

The review of this programme is limited by the fact that it has only been running for one academic year. However, the programme team proposed a number of changes and the EPRG recommends approval of the proposed changes.

The EPRG recommend validation of the programme for five years, or to the next programmatic review whichever is sooner, or for any other period agreed between GMIT and QQI. The recommendation for validation is subject to one condition and a number of recommendations as outlined in the body of this report.

This does not negate the need for the external panel that originally validated the programme to be reconvened in 2015 as outlined above.

Having considered the documentation provided and discussed it with the programme board, the panel recommends the following:

Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Digital Media & Society
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 conditions and 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

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

Note:
- The EPRG noted the success of the programme team in developing an innovative programme and in successfully implementing the first year of the programme.

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

Note:
- It was noted that there is a high percentage of mature students on this programme. There is an ongoing drive to increase student intake to the programme.

4.3 Award

Consideration for the panel:	Is the level and type of the award appropriate?

Overall Finding:	Yes

Note:
- When the programme was originally validated it was decided to seek approval for an exit award at level 7 as the programme team felt that and exit award at Level 6 would not give graduates marketable skills.

Recommendation(s):
- It is recommended that the programme team postpone their proposal to seek approval for a level 7 award until demand for the level 8 award is established in the coming years. The EPRG does not believe that the presence of a level 7 award will necessarily increase new student intake and may distract from the further development of the level 8 award. The EPRG also felt that the proposal was premature as the Level 8 programme had yet to complete one full cycle.

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

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 – Learning to Learn embedded in the programme but PASS is not correctly embedded

Note:
- The programme team indicated that they are particularly proud of the strong pass rate at the end of year one of the 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

Conditions(s):
- The programme team must provide the EPRG with evidence of the alignment of programme learning outcomes with the relevant QQI award standards.

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

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

Note:
- Members of the EPRG commented favourably on the use of technologies such as Pebble Pad and Moodle. The programme team indicated that despite a number of teething problems they were very pleased with how far they had come in the use of such technologies in the first year of the programme.

Recommendation(s):
- The EPRG recommends that the programme board consider the development, on a pilot basis of blended learning. This may be particularly effective given the age profile of the current student cohort and given some of the difficulties with limited on-site access to wifi, etc.
- The EPRG recommends that the programme team implement all of the recommendations in relation to teaching & learning methodologies made by the external panel that originally recommended validation of the programme in 2012. The EPRG noted that this aspect of the programme will be the subject of a separate review scheduled for 2015 and acknowledge that the outcome of this review may affect the continuing validation of this programme.

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 should be aligned with QQI policy (given in HETAC (2009) Assessment and Standards). The Programme EPRG should ensure that the assessment strategies adopted comply with all relevant national conventions. 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.

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

Note:
- It was noted that, as this is a new programme, there may appear to be some technology gaps. However, the programme team envisage that by year 3 these will be filled and the use of technology will be more advanced. Digital writing will be introduced in year two of the programme.

- **Recommendation(s):**
- The panel noted the use of a range of social media tools and the fact that students were encouraged to use such tools to build their digital profiles. It is recommended that this is highlighted as a special feature when marketing the programme to prospective students.

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

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

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

5.0 Module-Level Findings: General

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

5.2.1 Module (Title)

6.0 Student Findings

As only one student met with members of the panel, the observations made, while useful, are restricted. The student had just completed the first year of the programme. She enjoyed and commented on the fact that she found it varied and broad. She chose a language as an elective and also did another language and feels privileged that the structure of the programme afforded her the opportunity to do so.

It was the title of the programme that attracted the student to it, and she believes it to be quite unique in Ireland. She felt that some students didn't understand the importance of the 'society' part of the programme. She felt it was easy to get a Digital Media qualification but, for her, the 'Society' part was important. She acknowledged that this may not be the view of all students in her year.

The student found the first semester of Digital Media very challenging but she enjoyed it more as the year progressed. She yearned for something creative and it came eventually.
The student commended the Software Development lecturer. The student also communicated her concerns that Software Development was a difficult module for first years.

On a positive point she felt that 'Exploring Values' which covered development skills i.e. public speaking, presentations, etc. was one of the best things she did all year.

The student commented that facilities were poor. The labs were very restricted, with limited access to wifi, which was very slow. She is looking forward to seeing the new studio which is in development.

7.0 Stakeholder Engagement

Overall findings of the panel should be documented here.

8.0 Future Plans

Overall findings of the panel should be documented here.

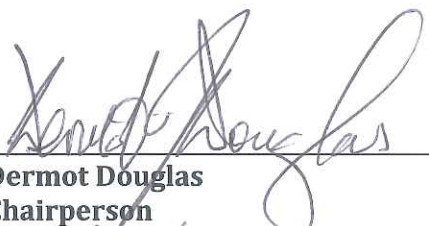| Consideration for the panel:	Evidence that the programme board considered and identified opportunities and signalled proposals for related new programme and award development.
Overall Finding:	Yes

Note:
- The programme team are considering seeking approval for a level 7 degree to increase visibility via the CAO with a view to increasing the overall student intake.
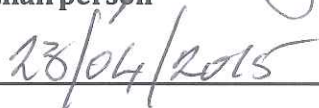
Recommendation(s):
- As already noted earlier in this report, it is recommended that the programme team postpone their proposal to seek approval for a level 7 award. This appears to be driven by effort to increase the programmes overall visibility on the CAO, rather than a current, demonstrable gap, in the market. The EPRG does not believe that the presence of a level 7 award will necessarily increase new student intake and is concerned that it may distract from the further development of the level 8 award.

Validation Panel Report Approved By:

Signed:

Dermot Douglas
Chairperson

Date: 28/04/2015