

External Peer Review Group Report



It was recently agreed that the Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Heritage Studies and the Bachelor of Arts in Heritage Studies titles be changed to:

**BA (Hons) in Culture and Environment (with Tourism) and
BA in Culture and Environment (with Tourism)**

External Peer Review Group Report



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

Named Award:	Bachelor of Arts
Programme Title(s):	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Culture and Environment (with Tourism) Bachelor of Arts in Culture and Environment (with Tourism)
Exit Award(s):	BA (Hons) in Culture and Environment (with Tourism)
Award Type:	Ordinary Degree, Honours Degree
Award Class:	Major
NFQ Level:	Level 7 Level 8
ECTS / ACCS Credits:	180, 240
Location:	Mayo
Minor Award(s):	None

Panel Members

Name	Position	Organisation
Dr John McDonagh	Chair	NUIG
Sean Duignan	Secretary	GMIT
Dr James Hanrahan	IOT Member	IT Sligo
Prof. Gearoid O'Tuathaigh	University Member	NUIG
Dr Deirdre Cunningham	Professional Practitioner	Mayo County Council
Liam Loftus	Institute Graduate	Ballycroy National Park

Programme Board Team

Fergal O'Dowd	Pearse McDonnell	Niamh Hearn
Dr Sean Lysaght	Michael Gill	Declan Hoban
Maria Daly	Fiona White	Dr Yvonne McDermott
Margaret O'Riordan	Dr Deirdre Garvey	Jessica Lysaght

1 Introduction

The following report to Academic Council is a validation panel report from an expert panel of assessors on Thursday 5th June 2014.

The report is divided into the following sections:

- Background to Proposed Programme

External Peer Review Group Report

- 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

After discussions the panel decided to approve the programme with one condition, some recommendations and commendations. The Mayo campus underwent a Programmatic Review two years ago; it was conducted again this year to align with the programmatic review process across the Institute.

Condition(s):

- The panel formally request that the work experience module be revisited with a view to ensuring all necessary protocols are in place and to ensure all those involved (staff, students and host employers) are fully aware of Institute policy in terms of expectations and limitations and that best practice is followed including the facilitation of RPL.

Commendation(s):

- The panel would like to commend the programme board for their many initiatives across the campus including green campus, swift project and particularly their collaborations with the Outdoor Education programme.

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

Bachelor of Arts in Heritage Studies / BA (Hons) in Heritage Studies

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

External Peer Review Group Report

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 on their excellent work and engagement in this process, their dedication to their subject areas, enthusiasm, collegiality and outstanding commitment to their students, colleagues and broader Institute.
- The panel commend the programme board on their openness in addressing the challenges faced by 3rd level Institutes and the honesty of their endeavours.

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

External Peer Review Group Report

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

Recommendation(s):

- The panel recommend that the programme board approach the on-site market resource with a view to devising a site specific strategy to achieve a better balance in terms of age cohort for the programme to help ensure the long term sustainability of the programme.

Note: There is not a marketing resource on-site per se. There is a Schools Liaison Officer, with a Marketing Officer in Galway

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 recommends that the programme board consider the introduction of a 'career options and potential pathways for students' element to their programme, particularly in the 3rd/final year.

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

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)?
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External Peer Review Group Report

	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):

- The panel commend the programme board for their vision in developing a programme that has a rich diversity and quality.

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 board for their understanding of, and evident commitment to, enhancing the capacity of the region and their obvious contribution to continually helping develop its capacities and attractiveness.

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

It was noted that there are strong links with the Outdoor Education programme in Castlebar including considerable module sharing.

Commendation(s):

- The panel commend the programme board on instilling enthusiasm in their students, stimulating their interests and developing their critical skills and as one student declared, 'opening their minds'.

Recommendation(s):

- The panel recommend that the programme board look at the sequencing of modules in the programme with particular reference to *Society & Nature* preceding *Rural Development / GIS* preceding *Research Methods* to help in the progressive flow of the programme where timetabling / resources permit.
- The panel recommend that the programme board give serious consideration to reducing the number of students supervised per hour to a more realistic level, in the region of 4 per

External Peer Review Group Report

hour, in keeping with normative practice in this area. This will further build and enhance the quality of the research agenda / focus, clearly evident in the programme.

- The panel recommend that the programme board liaise with their colleagues in *Outdoor Education* in terms of their experience / success with the PASS process and the feasibility of employing this in the programme.

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 QOI/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.

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

Recommendation(s):

- The panel recommend that the programme board approach the IT services department with a view to improving IT timetabling, such that lab access is improved for the students of the programme.

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

External Peer Review Group Report

It was noted that collaboration is strong with the Galway campus in terms of research. It was also noted that research modules start in Y3 when students are encouraged to find an area they would like to research. To aid in this process, at the beginning of the year there is a class dedicated to dissertations for 5 to 6 weeks, usually during double periods. Further, previous dissertations are available in the library to provide examples for the students.

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

It was noted that some language students go on international field trips, however, there have also been culturally focused international fieldtrips of which Heritage students have availed. Also, Dr Deb Rotman, a faculty member of the University of Notre Dame, has applied for a Fulbright Fellowship to study clachans and cultural landscapes of Co. Mayo.

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

It was noted that it is the student's responsibility to find work experience. Criteria are given early on in the year of this requirement. If there is difficulty in sourcing work experience, the college tries to facilitate. In the event of there being no chance of work experience a work related project can be organised.

Condition(s):

- The panel formally request that the work experience module be revisited with a view to ensuring all necessary protocols are in place and to ensure all those involved staff / students and host employers are fully aware of Institute policy in terms of expectations, limitations and that best practice is followed including the facilitation of RPL.

Recommendation(s):

- The panel encourage the programme board to look at the work experience module with a view to increasing its weighting to 10 credit module.

External Peer Review Group Report

5.0 Module-Level Findings: General

Recommendation(s):

- The panel recommend that the programme board consider accreditation of specific modules which could be offered to other interested stakeholders in the wider community.

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

6.0 Student Findings

The students were all satisfied with the course. A 4th year student said it was an interesting course, but needed more GIS, as this would have been more helpful for career prospects – a student who applied for an internship was unsuccessful because he wasn't at a sufficient level on GIS. Another student thought that the theoretical part of the programme was really good and plans to proceed to postgraduate studies.

A 3rd year student thought it was a brilliant course, but that it doesn't "sell" itself from the title and he suggested the title should include the word *environment* or *culture*. The students recommended that the modules should be changed around to help with the flow of subjects. There was very little talked about career paths. A 2nd year student, who was self-employed, stumbled upon the course and has not looked back, even though he finds it challenging at times. They all agreed that work experience is paramount and that employers are not aware of what Heritage means and hence the programme could do with a new PR exercise.

Heritage is often found to be more popular with mature students. The students were unhappy with resources at times. The IT labs were often booked up and students had to sit around waiting for them to free up. The students were all happy with assessment feedback.

Induction is good but there could be improvements; learning to learn should be more integrated and tailored to the programme. They didn't have PAL in 1st year. They all agreed the library should open earlier.

7.0 Stakeholder Engagement

It was noted that the reaction from stakeholders in relation to this programme was very positive. There has been a lot of community engagement activity – for example, one student was involved in the National Museum and there was also some volunteer work done at local level.

Commendation(s):

- The panel would like to commend the programme board on their excellent and real links with the community, region and industry stakeholders.

External Peer Review Group Report


8.0 Future Plans

It was noted that a marketing officer was employed last year in Castlebar as well as a school liaison officer. Note, A Marketing Officer was employed by the Institute rather than having a specific remit for the Mayo Campus, as this sentence suggests. The Schools Liaison Officer, while based in Castlebar, has a remit for the Institute and not specifically for the Mayo Campus. While the student profile is changing slightly, it will take time for results of this initiative to show. There continues to be a big push to get a younger cohort of students on this programme.

<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 John McDonagh
Chairperson

Date:

8/6/2015