



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

Named Award:	Postgraduate Diploma
Programme Title(s):	Postgraduate Diploma in Accounting
Exit Award(s):	None
Award Type:	Postgraduate Diploma
Award Class:	Major
NFQ Level:	Level 9
ECTS / ACCS Credits:	60 Credits
Minor Award(s):	None
Location:	Galway

Panel Members

Name	Position	Organisation
Dr Frank McMahon	Chairperson	Retired Dublin Institute of Technology
Gerry Talbot	Secretary	Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology
Eoin Langan	IOT Member	Athlone Institute of Technology
Michelle O'Sullivan	University Member	University of Limerick
Tom Canavan	Professional Practitioner	
Martina Casey	Institute Graduate	

Programme Board Team

Delma Carey	Raymond Holly
Carmel Brennan	Shane Moran
Louise Langan	Joe Farrell
Richie Hoare	Nicholas Canny
Deirdre McHugh	

1 Introduction

The following report to Academic Council is a validation panel report from an expert panel of assessors on the approval of the programme Postgraduate Diploma in Accounting

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 External Peer Review Group (EPRG) has come to the conclusion that they approve the programme for a further five academic years or until the next programmatic review, whichever occurs sooner, subject to a number of recommendations.
- The EPRG commend the amount of work that the programme board have put into the SER Document.
- The EPRG were impressed with this programme and acknowledge that it is well crafted to meet the specified needs of the Professional Bodies requirements with regard to exemptions. They also noted that it is also very well delivered by staff, who work hard and are committed to the students of this programme.

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

Postgraduate Diploma 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 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 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 to include 1 recommendation

It was noted that clarity is required in the SER document with regard to which information is directly related to this programme, particularly concerning External Examiner Reports.

Recommendation:

- The EPRG suggest that more explanation of the SWOT analysis should be included in the SER document. This analysis should include ideas of how to exploit opportunities and strengths and solutions on how to mitigate weaknesses and threats.

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 to include 1 recommendation

Recommendation:

- The EPRG noted that student numbers are currently not very high on this programme. As a result, it may become vulnerable in the future, therefore the panel suggest that market conditions should be analysed and operationalised when formulating any future plans for this programme.

4.3 Award

<i>Consideration for the panel:</i>	Is the level and type of the award appropriate?
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<i>panel:</i>	
<i>Overall Finding:</i>	To include 1 recommendation

Recommendation:

- The EPRG recommends that the programme board review the learning outcomes of this programme to ensure that they reflect Level 9 learning outcomes and that the assessment of those learning outcomes is appropriate for a Level 9 award.

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

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 to include 1 recommendation

Recommendation:

- The EPRG recommends that the programme board investigate the possibility of also delivering this programme on a part time basis. This would make it accessible to people who work full time and who want to gain a qualification in this field. Economies of scale could be used by having some modules running together for both full and part time students.

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.
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	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 to include 1 recommendation

The awards standards requirements for programmes on the NFQ Framework can be found at http://www.hetac.ie/publications_pol01.htm

Recommendation:

- The EPRG recommends that the programme board pursue Professional Body exemptions from All Professional Bodies as this is extremely important for the students of this programme.

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 to include 2 recommendations

Recommendations:

- The EPRG recommends that the programme board could consider offering electives on this programme. The board should also investigate the possibility to incorporate electives with other Master’s programmes within the Connacht Ulster Alliance.
- The EPRG noted that the number of contact hours on this programme is at the upper level. This should not be allowed to grow further in the future.

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 to include 1 recommendation

Recommendation:

- The EPRG recommends that the programme board consider making the use of laptops/notebooks mandatory across this programme for students.

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 to include 2 recommendations

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.

Recommendations:

- Students should have a detailed schedule of assessments which breaks down the continued assessment and the timing of those assessments. There should be both formative and summative assessments included.
- The programme board should address the possibility of having shared or integrated assessments between different modules. (An example would be a case study which would integrate different modules)

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 to include 1 recommendation

Recommendation:

- The EPRG recommends that lab facilities and resources should be reviewed as some may need to be updated.

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 to include 1 recommendation

Recommendation:

- The EPRG commented that they didn't see evidence of research other than the research regarding Professional Bodies syllabi. The Institute should support such research and lecturers of this programme should be ahead in terms of future developments in Accounting (For Example new IFRS being introduced).

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 to include 1 recommendation

Recommendation:

- The EPRG recommends that the programme board develop a marketing strategy with a view to promote this programme both nationally and internationally.

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>	N/A

5.0 Module-Level Findings: General

Commendations and Recommendations:

- The EPRG fully endorse the student visit to Medtronic and felt this was an extremely useful exercise. They recommend that the programme board make such visits a feature each year and that lecturers should integrate an assessment around the knowledge gained.
- The EPRG commends the use of Excel in the Management Accounting and Financial Accounting modules. The EPRG recommends that the programme board should consider expanding this to all modules on this programme. They also recommend

the programme board set up workshops in the use of Excel, Power point, Sage and Sap 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 to include 1 recommendation

Recommendation:

- The EPRG state that the Module Descriptors should be updated to include Learning Outcomes, Teaching Strategy and Assessment Strategy for every module.

6.0 Student Findings

Due to the timing of the meeting there were no students available.

7.0 Stakeholder Engagement

It was noted that the programme board consulted with industry employers, professional bodies, graduates and students of the programme as part of the SER process.

Recommendation:

- The Programme Board should review how they implemented/ reflected the changes from the stakeholder engagement feedback into the programme.

8.0 Future Plans

<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 to include 2 recommendations

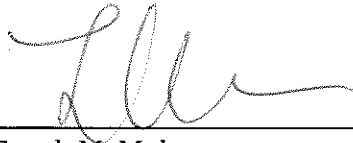
Recommendations:

- The EPRG recommends that the programme board develop a marketing strategy with a view to promoting this programme both nationally and internationally.
- The EPRG suggests that if the programme is targeted for both practice and industry in the future, the programme board should widen the modules to reflect an industry focus.

Validation Panel Report Approved By:

External Peer Review Group Report

Signed:



Dr Frank McMahon
Chairperson

Date:

25/4/2015