



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

<b>Named Award:</b>	Higher Certificate in Business in Computer Applications
<b>Programme Title(s):</b>	Higher Certificate in Business in Computer Applications
<b>Exit Award(s):</b>	None
<b>Award Type:</b>	Higher Certificate
<b>Award Class:</b>	
<b>NFQ Level:</b>	Level 6
<b>ECTS / ACCS Credits:</b>	120
<b>Location:</b>	Mayo
<b>Minor Award(s):</b>	None

### Panel Members

Name	Position	Organisation
Billy Bennett	Chair	LYIT
Gerry Talbot	Secretary	GMIT
Damien Courtney	IOT Member	CIT
Ed Curry	University Member	NUIG
Tom Canavan	Professional Practitioner	Self Employed
Peter Hopkins	Institute Graduate	

### Programme Board Team

Janine McGinn	Deaglan O'Riain	David Cashman
Michael Gill	Celine Dunphy	Brian Mulhern
Shane Byrne	Declan Hoban	Egbert Polski
Caroline Clarke	Jessica Lysaght	Niamh Hearn
Hugh McBride	Clodagh Geraghty	Deirdre Garvey
Maria Daly		

## 1 Introduction

The following report to Academic Council is a validation panel report from an expert panel of assessors on the Higher Certificate in Business in Computer Applications

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

After discussions the panel have decided to approve the programme with some recommendations and commendations, and one condition in relation to the title. The panel congratulated the Programme Board for the impressive, clear and strong layout of their SER document. The campus underwent a programmatic review two years ago and was conducted again to synchronise with all programmes across the Institute.

The Panel wanted to commend the quality of the SER documentation and the positive level of engagement of the programme team with the panel, conducted in a spirit of enhancement and collaboration.

Note: - Amendment to "Introduction to Accountancy" (error in SER Document) should be :-

30% - Continuous Assessment

70% - Exam

On page 48 & 58

Note: - Amendment to "Business Mathematics" (error in SER Document) should be:-

20% - CA

80% - Exam

On Page 60

The condition as below has been placed in the Future Plans section.

### Condition:

It was recognised by the panel and the programme team that the title of the programme is dated and no longer fully reflects the programme content.

- The programme title is changed to reflect the programme content and philosophy and the changing work environment. Options for a revised programme title:-

Higher Certificate in Business with

- Administration and ICT Skills

Or

- Administration and Digital Skills

Or

- Administration and Technology

Or

- Business IT and Administration

There is an opportunity to further promote / market the programme with a new programme title, including the progression opportunities from the programme.

Module specific recommendations:-

- Web design: review relevance of web design module which is currently focused on low-level implementation/design of webpages. Module should focus on higher level web application frameworks (for example – word-press)
- PC Applications – review module title – e.g. re-title as Office Applications or Office/Enterprise Information Systems.
- Advanced PC Applications – review module title, as above.

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

**Higher Certificate in Business in Computer Applications**

*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/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):

- The quality of the Self Evaluation Review documentation
- Positive level of engagement with the panel, conducted in a spirit of enhancement and collaboration

#### 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

##### Recommendation(s):

- The Department should strategically develop minor / SPAs to meet CPD /Industry needs of the region (Beginners Irish, for example, could be addressed via such awards)
- The review process was undertaken jointly across a suite of programmes; however it would benefit from a programme-specific review, in addition to the review of the programme suite.

#### 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

##### Commendation(s):

- Panel are supportive of the retention of a Higher Certificate Programme. The Foundation Certificate is a useful entry route to the Higher Certificate especially for the mature students.

#### 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

The panel feel that the mature student looks to do this course as opposed to the Leaving Cert student. It seems to be gearing towards an office administration role. The student can transfer into 3<sup>rd</sup> year Business.

**Recommendation(s):**

- Consider developing a progression route for students on this programme (for example a named IT stream on the level 7 Bachelor of Business)
- There is an opportunity to promote / market the programme with a new programme title, including the progression opportunities from the programme.

**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

The panel felt that the numbers coming in 2011 were good over-all, the 2<sup>nd</sup> year numbers show a drop, but this may be due to the uptake on Springboard.

**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)? 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](http://www.hetac.ie/publications_pol01.htm)

**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):**

- Note changes that have been proposed two years ago in the 2012 Programmatic Review. Build these into the Implementation Plan.

**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

There is some commonality in modules sharing among classes and tasks are shared.

### Recommendation(s):

- Programme team should develop a strategy for flexible / blended learning in the delivery of the programme.
- Consider offering additional supports / tutorials for first year students with low levels of IT literacy.

### 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 QQI/HETAC Assessment and Guidelines, 2009)?
<i>Overall Finding:</i>	Yes

There is a variety of different assessment tools relevant to each programme.

Some are 100% continual assessment, certain modules are lab based.

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

### 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?
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<i>Overall Finding:</i>	Yes
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### 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

### 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

## 5.0 Module-Level Findings: General

The panel wished to note the extent of module/resource sharing across the suite of business programmes.

### Recommendation(s):

Module specific recommendations:-

- Web design: review relevance of web design module which is currently focused on low-level implementation/design of webpages. Module should focus on higher level web application frameworks (for example – word-press)
- PC Applications – review module title – e.g. re-title as Office Applications or Office/Enterprise Information Systems.
- Advanced PC Applications – review module title, as above.

### 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**

### **5.2.1 Module (Technology / ICT modules)**

#### **Recommendation(s):**

- Review Technology/ICT modules to ensure titles and content are reflective of current technology. Elements relating to digital multimedia applications should also be included.

## **6.0 Student Findings**

### **5 students:**

The students were involved in the programmatic review discussions, most were happy with the process. Having a mix of modules gave them a good opportunity to get the feel of the programme – it was overall very positive. It gave a good idea of the business side if you didn't know anything; some students, however found the computer side disappointing. These students were looking for work experience at the moment so it is a 'good idea to have the cert behind you'.

The students thought the title of the programme was misleading. A more accurate title would be something like Business & IT or Computers & Business or Administration and IT. They didn't have multi-media applications and they would have liked it. Software Development could be joined with something else – digital multi-media.

They would have liked Web Development though not sure if they would use it in the real world. Employers are more interested in Wordpress. As a start-up business web design would be important to develop, advertise and market products. They all agreed that probably Wordpress would be the most beneficial in the workplace. The students all agreed that they would be well prepared to set up a business after doing the course.

The lecturers and students on this course used moodle. The students all agreed facilities on site were ok with the exception of IT which needs a good overhaul.

One of the students came in via the Foundation Course – and found he was prepared well for college. They all agreed the title brought them to the programme but found the content is quite different. They didn't feel the ECDL programme was a sufficient IT level to come in on.

Work experience is hard to find in the relevant areas of employment. The time is short and it may be better in Y3. All students would have taken up beginners Irish if it was available. Most students did Spanish. If they had a choice they would introduce more software development.

One student was one of a class of 15 and a lot of the time was taken up with students who had little or no computer knowledge and agreed that a crash course for students in need of this would be very beneficial. A bit more choice after 2 years would be welcome or possible entry in to IT Support as an Add-on.

## **7.0 Stakeholder Engagement**



Overall findings of the panel should be documented here.

### 8.0 Future Plans

It was recognised by the panel and programmatic review team that the title of the programme is dated and no longer fully reflects the programme content.

<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

**Condition(s):**

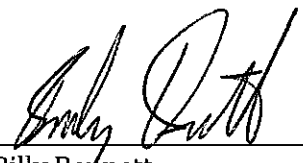
It was recognised by the panel and the programme team that the title of the programme is dated and no longer fully reflects the programme content.

- The programme title is changed to reflect the programme content and philosophy and the changing work environment. Options for a revised programme title:-

- Higher Certificate in Business with
- Administration and ICT Skills  
Or
  - Administration and Digital Skills  
Or
  - Administration and Technology  
Or
  - Business IT and Administration

**Validation Panel Report Approved By:**

**Signed:**

  
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 Billy Bennett  
 Chairperson

**Date:**

24 April 2015.