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:	Higher Certificate in Science Bachelor of Science (Ordinary) Bachelor of Science (Honours)
Programme Title(s):	Higher Certificate in Science in Information Technology Support Bachelor of Science in Information Technology Administration Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Computer Services Management
Exit Award(s):	Higher Certificate in Science in Information Technology Support – Level 6 Bachelor of Science in Information Technology Administration – Level 7 Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Computer Services Management – Level 8
Award Type:	Major
Award Class:	Higher Certificate Ordinary Degree Honours Degree
NFQ Level:	Level 6 Level 7 Level 8
ECTS / ACCS Credits:	120, 180, 240
Location:	Mayo

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

Brian Mulhern	Mark Frain	Egbert Polski
Michael Gill	Attracta Brennan	Noreen Henry
Deirdre Garvey	Brian Crean	Sharon Boyle
Andrew Beatty		

1 Introduction

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

The External Peer Review Group met with the programme design teams to discuss the proposed changes to the programmes. Following a wide ranging discussion the EPRG recommends approval of all changes proposed in the SER documents. The EPRG further recommends accreditation of the programmes for a period of five years or until the next programmatic review, whichever comes sooner, or for any other period agreed between GMIT and QQI, subject to two conditions and a number of recommendations as outlined in the body of this report.

While the EPRG agreed that the programmes were generally fit for purpose, it is suggested, amongst other recommendations, that consideration be given to including a greater emphasis on cloud computing and data modelling. It is further recommended that the programme assessment strategy be reviewed with a view to rebalancing the continuous assessment and examination elements.

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

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

Recommendation(s):

- The EPRG suggests that the programme design undertake a more nuanced and analytical review of statistics associated with the programme to derive a greater level of programme management intelligence, ascertain particular weaknesses in performance and address issues of retention and completion.

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

4.3 Award

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

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

Note:
- It was noted that, in the SER, the programme design team lists as a weakness the fact that graduates are employable after the level 6 and level 7 programmes and thus some fail to progress to the level 8 programme. The EPRG suggest that this should be regarded as a strength rather than a weakness.

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

Condition(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	Is the programme structure logical and well designed and can the stated

panel:	programme intended learning outcomes in terms of employment skills and career opportunities be met by this programme?
Overall Finding:	Yes

Conditions(s):
- The Proposed Programme Schedule be given a thorough edit so that all errors are eliminated and programme requirements and special regulations are clearly stated.

Recommendation(s):
- Given that 'big data' is likely to play a significant part in the future of the industry, the EPRG recommend consideration be given to redesigning existing modules on the degree programmes, or adding new modules, in order to place greater emphasis on cloud computing and data modelling.
- It is recommended that consideration be given to assigning more credits to the final year project, to better reflect the work effort required to complete the module.

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

Recommendation(s):
- Student feedback indicated that graduates were unprepared for the selection processes associated with certain industries, e.g. the software development industry. The EPRG recommends that consideration be given to how students might be prepared better for specific types of work environments.
- The EPRG recommends that academic mentoring be provided for all students to ensure that they receive adequate guidance with regard to the skills they will attain from the various elective streams.
- The panel suggest that the Programme team consider how they might expand the entrepreneurship models and/or develop a mechanism whereby availability may be expanded to all students on the 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.

Recommendation(s):
- The EPRG recommends a rebalancing of assessments, particularly in years three and four, to better reflect student effort. The EPRG suggests that a 50/50 breakdown between continuous assessment and final exam be considered.

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

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

Recommendation(s):
- Given that big data is likely to play a significant part in the future of the industry, the EPRG suggests that consideration be given to redesigning existing modules on the degree programmes, or adding new modules, in order to place greater emphasis on cloud computing and data modelling.
- It is recommended that consideration be given to assigning more credits to the final year project to better reflect the work effort required to complete the module.

5.1 Module Assessment Strategies

Consideration for the panel:	Have appropriate module assessment strategies been included in each Module Descriptor?
Overall Finding:	Yes

6.0 Student Findings

The EPRG met with eleven students who were generally positive about the programmes under review. They commented particularly positively on the following:
- The variety of modules on offer
- The broadness of the programmes
- The industry experience of academic staff
- The practical/hands-on nature of the programme
- The approachability of lecturers.

Students commented negatively on the intensity of year two of the programme and on the significant pressure they felt in completing assessments and projects.

Students also expressed disappointment at the fact that all the work required to complete continuous assessments in years three and four only accounted for 30% of their grade in many modules. They felt a 50/50 or 60/40 split would better reflect the work effort required to complete assessments.

Most students were of the view that the project in Year 4 was difficult and that the credits given did not reflect the work effort required to complete it. However, they also felt that the project was of significant importance in gaining employment upon graduation.

Students suggested that mock interviews and preparation for the selection processes in certain industries could be very beneficial.

They also suggested that there should be more focus on the 'windows domain' and 'virtualisation'.

All agreed that they would recommend this programme to their friends.

7.0 Stakeholder Engagement

Overall findings of the panel should be documented here.

8.0 Future Plans

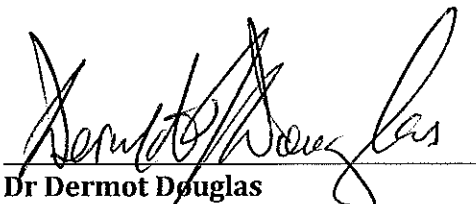Overall findings of the panel should be documented here.

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:
- It was noted that the programme team propose the development of a new level 7 programme to commence in Sept. 2016.

Validation Panel Report Approved By:

Signed:

Dr Dermot Douglas
Chairperson.

Date: 23/04/2015.