

External Peer Review Group Report



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

Named Award:	Bachelor of Arts
Programme Title(s):	BA (Honours) Outdoor Education and Leisure BA Outdoor Education and Leisure
Exit Award(s):	None
Award Type:	Honours Degree, Degree
Award Class:	Major
NFQ Level:	Level 8 Level 7
ECTS / ACCS Credits:	240, 180
Location:	Mayo
Minor Award(s):	None

Panel Members

Name	Position	Organisation
John McDonagh	Chair	NUIG
Sarah Searson	Secretary	GMIT
James Hanrahan	IOT Member	IT Sligo
Loel Collins	University Member	University of Central Lancaster
Deirdre Cunningham	Professional Practitioner	Mayo County Council
Mark O'Connor	Institute Graduate	Delphi Adventure Centre

Programme Board Team

Michael Gill	Orla Prendergast	Kevin O'Callaghan
Pauline Jordan	Maria Daly	Stephen Hannon
Davy Walsh	Janine McGinn	Deirdre Garvey
Edgar Polski		

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:

External Peer Review Group Report

- 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 Panel commended the Programme Board on their work and found the documentation clear and strong and subsequent interview/meeting to be collegial, informative and cohesive. The External Peer Review Panel have approved the programme for reaccreditation, with one condition, recommendations for improvements and a number of commendations. The Panel acknowledged that the Mayo Campus underwent a Programmatic Review two years ago, at this time new modules were introduced along with some minor changes. This current review process now synchronises the programme with all programmes across the Institute.

One new module in Orienteering Leadership has been proposed by the Programme Board (PB). The External Peer Review Panel commended the board on this innovation which has identified opportunities to work with schools and communities and encourages them to continue to develop this opportunity.

The PB expressed interest in proposing a Level 9 programme.

Condition:

- The research component of the programme design is an important element for its future development, in particular, for student's progression to Level 8 and the development of Level 9. The panel formally request that the programme board develop an explicit module which includes research methodologies and literature review as a separate 5 credit module in year 3 with an appropriate title.

Commendations:

- The panel commend the programme board on their excellent links within and across the campus.
- The panel commend the programme board on their work and the excellent documentation produced.

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

Bachelor of Arts in Outdoor Education and Leisure

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

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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

Commendations:

- The panel commend the PB on their work and the excellent documentation produced for the review process.
- The panel commend PB on activities which engage with the community at a regional level and for their recognition of needs and opportunities within the region.
- The panel commends the PB for developing opportunities such as that identified in Orienteering.

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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

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

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 & Innovation Skills) 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?
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	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

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

It was noted that the programme offers students a varied choice of electives, and from stage 1 to stage 3 students are encouraged to develop pathways which support the elective strands; Social Geography/Rural Geography, Language, Business and Social Care. Students are informed of the implications of their choices; so pathways are clear to them early in their studies. Most students have a free choice for 5 credits.

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 was a lot of collaboration and shared modules across the Campus.

Commendations:

- The panel commend the PB for their collegial and supportive nature in terms of their engagement with students and fellow colleagues.
- The panel commend the PB for their creativity in terms of integrating different modules in a very appropriate manner to 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 QQI/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) :

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- 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:

- The panel recommend that the programme board make a detailed submission to the Institute which strongly recommends the implementation of a rolling resource plan to support upgrading of necessary materials on an annual and planned basis. This should include transport needs which have/will become a concern for the PB in the coming years.

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

It was noted that a literature review and research methodology in preparation for a dissertation, can be daunting for students and in some cases students had difficulty sourcing and researching material.

Condition:

- The panel formally request that the programme board develop an explicit research element including research methodology and literature review as a separate 5 credit module in year 3 with an appropriate title.

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

Commendation:

- The panel commend the programme board on how they have developed their programme to be an International leader in terms of Outdoor Education.

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 the work experience in year 2 is worth 5 credits, with possible expansion – but this may limit electives.

Recommendations:

- The panel recommend that the programme board continually review the work experience element with a view to increasing the length of the time in which students can gain such experience.
- The panel recommend that the programme board clearly document and illustrate the large amount of embedded work experience that students engage in across modules.

5.0 Module-Level Findings: General

Recommendation:

- The panel recommend that the Learning to Learn module title should be changed to reflect the new Institute title and that the programme board engage with the Institute to ensure the content is contextualised for the programme.

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

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6.0 Student Findings

Two first year students presented. Both students were happy with their experiences on the programme. They found the IT class was delivered at too advanced a level and that an induction for the IT module would have been helpful. One student had little prior experience in this area and was weak at IT, and he found there is no lead in. He observed a large drop out from the classes and even though there were general requests for help, these were not attended to. This student was from a sports background and he found the past year very enjoyable. He would like to gain work experience from 1st year. He was not aware that there was a Programme Board and wasn't aware of the class reps attending any meetings. Module choices were pointed out clearly at interview.

The second student was happy to be back into education and she agreed about the work placement suggestion and thought it would be very beneficial to the younger student to get used to the work environment. Assignments were given via Moodle and at lectures. Communications between students and lecturers were very open. The course is well resourced except there could be more working printers available. PASS works well - 2nd and 3rd years come in to help 1st years.

7.0 Stakeholder Engagement

8.0 Future Plans

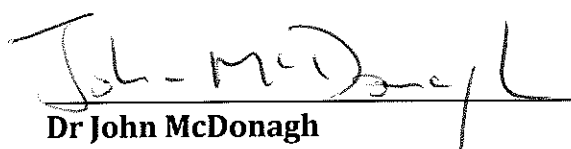
<i>Consideration for the panel:</i>	Evidence that the programme board considered and identified opportunities and signalled proposals for related new programme and award development.
<i>Overall Finding:</i>	Yes

Commendations:

- The panel commend the programme board on their recognition of future strategies and vision in terms of the possible development of an MA programme and the strengthening of Outdoor Education in the region.
- The Panel commend the programme board on their vision in terms of future industry requirements.
- The Panel commend the board on their continual desire to ensure their programme is a leader in the field and encourage them to continue to develop opportunities similar to the new module in Orienteering Leadership as proposed by the Programme Board (PB).

Validation Panel Report Approved By:

Signed:


Dr John McDonagh
Chairperson

Date:

27/4/2015