

# External Peer Review Group Report

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Mayo

The External Peer Review Group Report for the BA in Applied Social Studies and the BA (Hons) in Applied Social Studies has been reviewed for factual accuracy and omissions. There are no changes to the report.

# External Peer Review Group Report



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

<b>Named Award:</b>	Bachelor of Arts
<b>Programme Title(s):</b>	Applied Social Studies
<b>Exit Award(s):</b>	None
<b>Award Type:</b>	Ordinary Degree Honours Degree
<b>Award Class:</b>	Major
<b>NFQ Level:</b>	Level 7 Level 8
<b>ECTS / ACCS Credits:</b>	180, 240
<b>Location:</b>	Mayo
<b>Minor Award(s):</b>	None

### Panel Members

Name	Position	Organisation
John McDonagh	Chair	NUIG
Sean Duignan	Secretary	GMIT
Frank Keating	IOT Member	WIT
Fiona Dukelow	University Member	UCC
Fiona Jennings	Professional Practitioner	ISPCC
Marian Staunton	Institute Graduate	Mayo Children's Initiative

### Programme Board Team

Mary Nestor	Sheila McArdle	Davy Walsh
Mark Garavan	Clodagh Geraghty	Suzanne Sweeney
Kathleen Taheny Murphy	Ann Caulfield	Deirdre Garvey
Marie English		

## 1 Introduction

The following report to Academic Council is a validation panel report from an expert panel of assessors on Friday 6<sup>th</sup> June 2014

The report is divided into the following sections:

- Background to Proposed Programme
- General Findings of the Validation Panel

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- 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 no conditions, some recommendations and commendations. The Mayo campus underwent a Programmatic Review two years ago; a programmatic review was conducted again this year to align with the programmatic review process across the Institute.

### Recommendations:

- The panel recommend that the programme board rename and / or amend any reference to *Social Work* and replace it with *Social Care* in all documentation.
- The panel recommend that the programme board formalise / articulate a protocol for risk assessment and health & safety statements for students taking part in field engagements.
- The panel recommend that the programme board modify their programme document so that it refers to a peer supported reflective environment rather than using the word 'safe'.

### Commendations:

- The panel commends the programme board on their excellent work and engagement in this process, their obvious commitment to their discipline, and their enthusiasm, collegiality and dedication to students.
- The panel commends the programme board on their engagement with students in terms of addressing their concerns and making sure that students get the best possible advice and direction and truly making GMIT a student centred campus.

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 Applied Social 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 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

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describing the actions of the Department to address the conditions and recommendations made by the External Peer Review Group (EPRG). 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 GMT
- 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:

The panel commends the programme board on their very positive reaction and engagement with previous conditions and recommendations from the last programmatic review.

### 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

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## 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

It was noted that there was a policy around attendance – attendance is mandatory – if a student has missed modules / part of modules they are not allowed to do work placement and will have to wait until the uncompleted modules / work is delivered again.

## 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

It was noted that there is a part time programme which runs over 2 years – bridging modules to a level 7 attainment. Admissions => a minimum of 2 years professional practice – some have level 5, those going through RPL have to have level 6.

There is also an interview. These are strict entry requirements.

## 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)? 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)

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## 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

### Recommendation:

- The panel recommend that the programme board consider the possibility of better aligning the timing of certain skills training elements on this programme – e.g. how to take notes write an essay, do citation etc.... with the timing of assessments.

## 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 is a 'safe environment' procedure in place on this programme for longer placements. The students come back to college one day a week from their work placement where they can be completely honest and reflect/share their knowledge on their experience with their peers.

The panel agreed that reflective sessions are very important. They value being particularly evident since being introduced to Y1 on the re-vamped programme.

It was also noted that a guide has been written up for lecturers in relation to the learning to learn module, and that this could be embedded in other modules.

### Commendation:

- The panel commends the programme board on their excellent integration of theory & practice in developing engaged, enthusiastic and responsible students.

### Recommendation:

- The panel recommend that the programme board ensure that a standardised set of criteria is applied across the programme e.g. referencing styles.

## 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

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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

#### Recommendations:

- The panel recommend that the programme board reinforce (*i.e.* reiterate to students) on an annual basis - the on-line/and other sources (library) that are available to students, in terms of supporting the 'learning to learning' module.
- Due to the large numbers in the present cohort, the panel recommend that the programme board engage with campus management on the likely difficulties of dealing with large numbers should this happen again in the future and put a plan in place that would deal with the implications it would have for resources.

### 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 no decision has been made to develop a level 9 programme in the Mayo campus. This qualification can be sought through NUIG – research progression. It is a very positive acknowledgement of the programme that NUIG recognises the GMIT student qualification for their level 9 programme.

#### Recommendations:

- The panel recommend that the programme board consider introducing a research ethics committee as part of their programme board due to the nature of this course and programme content.

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- The panel recommend that the programme board consider introducing a module (or embed as part of a module) curriculum relating to 'ethics in research'.

### 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

#### Commendation:

- The panel commends the programme board on the mechanisms it employs to consider advanced entry applications through the RPL process, and in ensuring that progression follows all GMIT quality assurance procedures.

### 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 there has been joint research with students in the Netherlands.

### 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 successful work placements for students have included groups such as Foroige, Mayo Western Care and Enable Ireland, among others.

#### Recommendations:

- The panel recommend that the programme board make a request to the management of GMIT to have formal recognition of the actual hours associated with work experience/placement modules.
- The panel recommend that the programme board ensure that whoever is appointed as placement co-ordinator has accredited Social Care/or equivalent background.

## 5.0 Module Assessment Strategies



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

### 6.0 Student Findings

3 students presented.

One of the students was attracted to the course because of its broad nature and the fact that a lot of options are available. A friend preceded him on the course, so he had a great insight before starting. It suited the majority of the students geographically.

Another student didn't know what she wanted, but the career guidance advice steered her in the right direction towards this course.

Students would like to have longer work placements; they felt it would be more beneficial. Those coming in to this course after the foundation programme found they had been given a bit of a head start.

The *learning to learn* module was good, but a little refresher each year in the first week or two would be beneficial to keep up.

The students raised concerns about lecturers having different ways of referencing and citation, and they suggested that referencing should be standardised throughout the college. In terms of the learning diary, they are not sure if this is sufficient and suggested there should be accreditation for this.

### 7.0 Stakeholder Engagement

#### Commendation:

- The panel commends the programme board on their work in terms of community engagement, stakeholder engagement and their work with service organisations and the contribution this makes to 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

#### Commendation:

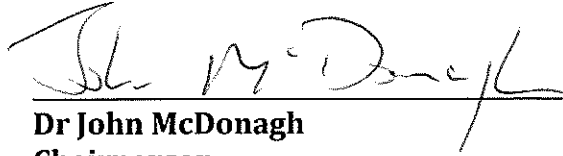
- The panel commends the programme board on their vision and future strategy for the programme and its development into a 'flagship' programme for the Institute.

#### Validation Panel Report Approved By:

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**Signed:**



**Dr John McDonagh**  
**Chairperson**

**Date:**

27/4/2015