



**Institute of Technology Sligo**  
**INSTITIÚID TEICNEOLAÍOCHTA SLIGEACH**

**PROGRAMME VALIDATION REPORT**

**DATE OF EVALUATION** 27<sup>th</sup> May 2016

**PROGRAMME EVALUATED** BSc (Hons) Health Science and Physical Activity L8 Ab-initio

**Unique Programme reference Number PRN:** SG\_SHEAL\_H08

**Panel of Assessors**

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**Declaration regarding any conflicts of interest:**

The members of the Panel signed a form confirming that they did not have any conflict of interest.

**Meeting with School Management**

**Attendees:**

Registrar: Colin McLean  
Head of School: Dr Jerry Bird  
Head of Department: Dr James Brennan  
Programme Coordinator: Dr Ken Monaghan  
Programme Author: Margaret McLoone

The Panel chair welcomed the additional staff and introductions were made. The programme author made a short presentation, with the following key rationale points raised for the proposed new Programme:

- Gap identified to develop a Level 8 direct entry programmes in the Health Sciences area
- A specific defined New cohort of graduates to address this growing area of health science and physical activity
- The unique skills will equip graduates with physical activity competencies across the physical activity spectrum from activities of daily living through to elite sports participation
- Broad range of other health aspects covered within this unique programme e.g. mental health, substance misuse, global health issues, social determinants of health, public health practice and health promotion practice
- Extensive Facilitation skills and professional practice competencies addressed
- Extensive research methodologies addressed within both the qualitative and quantitative arenas

- Employer demand, student demand, changing educational priorities (junior and leaving certificate), current health related policy and strategy direction, consultation with stakeholders

The Registrar commented on the current process of developing a new Institute Strategic Plan for 2016-2020 and the Institute's CUA submission. This programme is developed from existing programmes due to the identified need to have a CAO offering at Level 8. There has been a national trend in the drift in numbers towards Level 7 and Level 8 programmes. The BSc in Health Science and Physiology L7 has been a highly successful programme since its inception, consistently recruiting on high points with a strong demand and good market. Resources have been built up over the last 16 years and the Institute has a state of the art exercise physiology and other health science related laboratory facilities.

The panel agreed the need is well defined by the programme team but they would like to know what areas graduates will work in and who will be employing them. The programme author responded that areas could include working with children, Special Olympics, working with sports organisations in various settings setting and in an entrepreneurial capacity like lifestyle modification and wellness prescription. The Health Science programmes have a graduate tracker for the existing graduates. The panel commented that it would be useful to see this data in the documentation and asked how this information has influenced the design of programme. The programme coordinator said that the main feedback to influence the programme design transpired from supervisor placement feedback. The progression to physiotherapy sought by some students also influenced the programme design. There had been consultation with industry links and staff was also guided by the WHO and relevant National and International reports in this area.

The Panel queried whether students who graduate from this programme will be "work ready" or would they have to further their studies in more specific areas. They answered that some students exit at Level 7 to pursue other courses, others who stay for the full duration of the Level 8 are more prepared for work. There is a large number who exit after Level 7 to pursue degrees in physiotherapy, OT, radiography, human nutrition. The projected number of students for intake 2016/17 is 16.

Discussion was held on the differentiation of this programme to that of the current model of 3+ 1, can it stand on its own and it there enough emphasis on the physical activity aspect. The programme author explained all modules have a physical health aspect and the main difference is the way modules are assessed.

As this is a Level 8 programme the panel expected there to be a certain level of research in this area and they wanted to know the type of research are staff involved in. The School has a clinical research group which is bringing in research funding and has 5-6 postgraduates from Health Promotion working on clinical health. The Institute's exercise physiology laboratory is excellent and will be expanded. The Sligo General Hospital is actively looking for research to be carried out for them and opportunities be developed.

The programme is also liaising currently with HSE and St Angela's on infant feeding health related research. This programme will be helpful in encourage students to move in to research. Staff engages in social projects through CRISP.

The panel would encourage the Department Management team to consider an exit award at L6, which the Head of School welcomed.

Although the panel understood the rationale behind including a deferred mark between years, they strongly recommended removing this practice as it could cause difficulties in the event of a student failing exams.

### **Meeting with the programme development team-**

#### **Attendees:**

Dr James Brennan  
Dr Ken Monaghan  
Joanne Regan  
Padraig McGourty  
Eimear Donlon  
Maire Mc Callion  
Orla Warren  
Gail Cummins  
Margaret McLoone

The Panel chair welcomed the additional staff and introductions were made.

#### **Differentiation**

The panel queried staff if the expectations of students on the ab-initio Level 8 programme would be different to the students entering the level Level 7, and was the programme providing for this. Staff responded that as per our quality standards the learning outcomes should be structured to be Level 6 for first two years, 3<sup>rd</sup> year at Level 7 and 4<sup>th</sup> year at Level 8. This allows them to have a common first year. They do expect to have higher calibre of students with research capabilities. The option of a Level 8 entry in the CAO is crucial. The panel suggested that the earlier years could and should reflect a L8 level in an ab-initio programme and would there be a possibility to design a four-year experience, rather than a 2+1+1 model. The expectation is it will be different due to different intake of students; however students should have the same outcomes at the end of any Level 8. The existing cohort of students is strong and they operate at a higher level already. He agreed the assessments could reflect the higher level as they are assessed differently on the ab-initio.

#### **Programme Learning Outcomes**

The panel was impressed with the comprehensive documentation. The panel asked staff to give examples on how modules contributed to the statement *“Exercise appropriate judgement in planning, design, technical and/or supervisory functions related to products, services, operations or processes.* Staff responded that Professional Practice 1

and 2 meet this statement where students would identify a health problem and use a systematic approach to identify a solution. Research Methods 1 introduces students to qualitative and quantitative research methodologies and they devise research proposals. They would also use more applied qualitative research methods in Year 4.

As per the learning outcome *“Appreciate the limits of knowledge a scientific area”* are the students brought to the frontier? Modules have built in peer assessment and opportunity to self-reflect. In Applied Epidemiology students are required to look at critical appraisal and constraints of knowledge. Systematic review is also introduced in the Research modules. The Institute’s research carried out in Neural Plasticity is at the limit of knowledge and students are encouraged to get involved in research projects. The scope for a major research project is in the third year Health Science project. In 4<sup>th</sup> year students focus on professional practice and they identify, implement and research health problems and generate solutions to these issues. The Department received very positive feedback from external agencies on research performed by 3<sup>rd</sup> year students.

As per the Learning outcome *“Demonstrate mastery of a complex and specialised area of skills and tools; use and modify advanced skills and tools to conduct closely guided research, professional or advanced technical activity”* it states students should be able to *Maintain detailed records of activities*. In Fitness programming students pair up with a client for 10 weeks. During the 10 week period they instruct their client, conduct base line testing, keep detailed records and perform analysis. Students show video evidence and staff check in with clients. A final presentation is done before their peers.

Another aspect of this Learning Outcome is to *“Apply advanced numerical and statistical analysis skills*. This is covered in Information Technology 1 and 2, where students develop MS Excel basic and advanced skills, and Introduction to databases. They work with health statistic data analysis, develop research techniques and work with descriptive and hypothesis testing. In 4<sup>th</sup> year students will apply their knowledge of statistics in their studies such as health science project. Students work with qualitative research in 4<sup>th</sup> year.

The panel asked how as per Learning Outcome *“Learn to act in variable and unfamiliar learning contexts; learn to manage learning tasks independently, professionally and ethically”*, are students equipped in current fast moving areas. Students undertake peer reviews and they have a professional development plan in year 4, which identifies their objectives and weak areas. Students monitor how they progress with their objectives and report back. As part of one project the programme invite approx. 50 people with physical and intellectual disabilities for a three-week intervention programme. This contact helps students to identify where they may have knowledge gaps, they self evaluate and reflect on the learning. The panel emphasised the importance of first hand experience and strongly advised the valuable learning students get from volunteering and working with different cohorts of clients.

In relation to the Learning Outcome *“Develop a capacity for social responsibility”* how are student aware of what is expected of them. In 2<sup>nd</sup> year, they learn about social

determinants of health and also the impact the environment has on our health choices and social conscience. Their assessments include a discussion where they need to review government policy and advocate for a change in society. Volunteering is another contributor for expanding their social consciousness within the health arena. Students are constantly exposed to health determinants from global perspectives. The panel asked where students develop the capacity to defend their view (or development of cases from alternative perspectives to advocate for change) and present these ideas. Within the context of the module Global Health Issues students identify different worldviews and critically appraise them. The Sociology module highlights and links class and health and debates are encouraged.

### **Assessment**

The panel was impressed with the clear presentation of assessments. They did comment on the large volume of assessments in Year 4, and the number of workshops. In Year 4 in Population Health there are 5 workshops with self reflective tasks and peer assessment. Students do reflective logs and action based research.

Staff has cross mapped everything to ensure assessments are not overlapping and that the same skills are not assessed repeatedly. For example, the same research paper may be used in different subjects to assess different aspects of learning. The comprehensive assessment matrix aims to spread the work for students.

The division of continuous assessment and final exams has been discussed at Programmatic Review and the decision is deferred to the programme boards.

### **Resources**

Staff ensured the panel that resources are adequate, however, as some resources are shared with the public they could benefit from access to dedicated gym facilities.

### **Discussion on Modules**

#### **Psychology and Sociology PSYC06009**

Panel asked staff to review number of outcomes.

#### **Introduction to Health and Fitness HLTH06025**

Panel commented on the comprehensiveness of the module and the number of outcomes. The module includes practical elements.

#### **Mathematics MATH06071**

Lecturer works with other modules to give students a practical understanding of maths and how it is applied.

#### **Determinants of Health 1 HLTH06030**

This module includes an overview of determinants of health as well as health inequality.

### **Human Anatomy and Physiology HLTH06020**

Panel asked what this module included and is it specific enough. Staff responded it includes basic anatomy and respiratory system. Practical element is 50 %.

### **Foundation Chemistry CHEM06028**

The panel welcomed the inclusion of chemistry in the programme but queried the need for the subject. Staff highlighted the need for students to have the foundations as they might otherwise struggle with the Biochemistry component.

### **Health Communications COMM06055**

The panel queried if this module covered Professional communication and etiquette. It is covered to some extent in the IT module.

### **Introduction to Kinesiology and Exercise Instruction HLTH06022**

The panel asked if students work with the wider population. Staff responded they mainly work with each other but the assessment is video recorded and they do a peer review. They hope to link this module to the upcoming Medex pilot.

### **Health Biochemistry 1 BIO06003**

It is standard that biochemistry for health science is more applied.

### **Health Psychology HLTH06027**

Panel commented on the number of outcomes and recommended they were revisited.

### **Microbiology MCRO06001**

The panel recommended Learning outcomes 1-2 begin with "Appreciate.." rather than "Understand.." and that outcomes were reduced.

### **Physical Testing and Evaluation HLTH06032**

The panel queried how the clients were selected or is it all theoretical. They are theoretical but students test on each other and it links with the Fitness programme module. The outcomes could be reduced.

### **Health Biochemistry BIOC06002**

Staff were asked the reasoning behind not setting a final exam. They responded that the flipped classroom scenario work well and challenges students. Lectures consist of a short video and then students carry out practical work.

### **Facilitation and Group work Skills 1 HLTH06029**

This module deals with group conflict both in 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year. Bullying is mentioned. The panel recommended subjects such as bullying and social media are included in Induction handbook.

### **Fitness Programme Design and Delivery**

The panel commended the very comprehensive outcomes. The programme is currently seeking accreditation from REPS Ireland.

#### **Human Nutrition 1 SCI07004**

The panel recommended that staff review the outcomes and queried if some could be included elsewhere.

#### **Health Science Project PROJ07025**

Panel queried the placement of the project in Year 3 instead of year 4 on a Level 8 programme.

#### **Physical Activity for Special Populations HLTH07022**

Panel commended the module as it very targeted. It deals with gender and ethnicity in sociology and in determinants. The panel recommended they would try to build in additional certificates for students, for example, special purpose award or certificate of recognition.

#### **Health Statistics and Data Analysis MATH07026**

Large data sets, for example, CSO are used.

#### **Applied Epidemiology HLTH08017**

Wording Draft will be removed once validated.

#### **Professional Practice HLTH08020**

The 20 hours volunteering is sought out by the student, for example, they could work with Sligo volunteer centre. There is a possibility of some certificate of volunteering in 2<sup>nd</sup> year. The panel recommended Garda vetting needed to take place early due to double vetting now in place.

#### **Topics in Health Promotion HLTH08022**

This module brings up emerging issues in the field.

#### **Qualitative Methods for Health Research HTLH08019**

The panel queried the placement of this module, could it be taught earlier in the programme e.g. semester 7. Staff responded that is balancing with epidemiology in semester 7, otherwise there would be three statistics modules in semester 7. It is linked with professional practice where students run focus groups. Professional Practise 2 is group based and they do group research and learn about delivering intervention. Standardised testing is built in the process.

#### **Health Work Placement WORK08005**

Staff meet with students in year 1 to discuss work placement. Students submit weekly logs and site visits takes place midway through the placement. Students submit a final report when placement is complete. As per the last Programmatic review the placement commences after final exams in April. This works better and gives students a better opportunity to secure further employment.

#### **Global Issues in Public Health HLTH08021**



The panel suggested staff remove the use of Identify and Demonstrate verbs.

### **Summary of Findings**

Panel recommends this programme for validation with the following conditions and recommendations.

### **Panel Commendations**

We commend the aspirations and the rationale within the policy context. Learning outcomes and indicators are well developed and assessment well described.

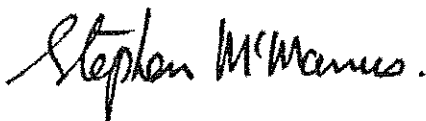
### **Panel Conditions**

1. Reconsider the level modules in year 2 and 3 are set at and redesign the level as appropriate with the view to increase the level to Level 8.
2. Review module learning outcomes and the number of outcomes per credits and consider best practice for module outcome specifications.
3. Review structure of programme.
4. Consider, if possible, to include Business modules either as mandatory or as electives.
5. Job titles and employment opportunities should be included in the submissions documents.
6. That physical activity is incorporated and carried through to Year 4.

### **Panel Recommendations**

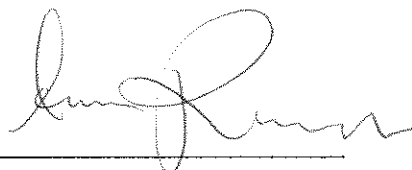
1. Review module learning outcomes to emphasis evidence of physical activity aspect of Programme.
2. Panel recognises the specialised and developing area involving both undergraduate and research and we would ask the Institute ensures that the public use of resources does not intrude unnecessarily on the learning experience of the students and the possibility of research.

Signed on behalf of programme validation Panel



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Mr Stephen McManus  
Chairperson  
Date: 27<sup>th</sup> May 2016



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Ms Annica Rasmak  
Recording Secretary  
Date: 27<sup>th</sup> May 2016