



**Institute of Technology Sligo
INSTITIÚID TEICNEOLAÍOCHTA SLIGEACH**

PROGRAMME VALIDATION REPORT

DATE OF EVALUATION: 25th May 2016

PROGRAMME EVALUATED: Bachelor Business in Business Administration L7 Ab-initio

Unique Programme reference Number PRN: SG_BADMN_B07

Panel of Assessors:

Chair: Gerard O'Donovan, *Head of Faculty of Business and Humanities, CIT*

Panel members: Ray Keaney, *Head of Department of Management, ITT Dublin*

Michael Gill, *Head of Department Business, Humanities & Technology, GMIT – Mayo Campus*

Sean Mulhern, *Mulhern Leonard, Chartered accountants, Sligo*

Associate Professor Jessica Eriksson - *Umeå University, Sweden*

Feidhlim Seoige, *The Union of Students in Ireland*

Rory O'Connor, *Sligo Live*

Brian King, *Group Operations Manager, Kingfisher Group, Kingfisher Club*

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 and Programme Development team

Attendees:

Fergal Keane (HOD)	Alan Kelly
Cillian O'Murchu	Susan Leonard
John Creed	Caroline Casey
Gary Reynolds	Angela Bartlett
Beatrice Flavin	John Gaynor
Aiden Bell	Helen Grady
Mairead McCann	Clodagh Crowe
Karen McManus	

The Chair welcomed School Management and the Programme Development team and introduced the panel.

Programme design, modifications and title and rationale

There is a concern over falling student numbers and falling retention rates and changes are informed by feedback from graduates and industry. Feedback received from 2nd level is that students are looking for L7 or L8 programmes and the new L7 will be more attractive to Leaving Cert Students. Employers have specific needs from graduates and this programme will meet those needs and it offers more flexible pathways through programmes. The Department still expects to get Level 6 students.

Learning Outcomes

The panel sought clarity on whether Learning Outcomes on the new the programme are the same as Learning Outcomes for existing programmes. Two major changes have been made to modules on existing programme (24 May 2016) and it is essential that Learning Outcomes remain unchanged. The L7 Ab-initio has the same Learning Outcomes as the L7 add-on. The Programme Board to be aware that QA1 and QA2 have been dissolved and look at QQI standards.

Delivery Methodologies and Assessment Strategies

Students from different programmes have common modules and it is essential that they have same final exam and assessment. The panel commented it is crucial that this is clearly stated in documentation, the example of Financial Accounting 1 was given. A point was made that the profile of learner will not change much and the very high proportion of Final Exam (FE) could prove challenging for 1st year students. Staff should look at greater weighting towards CA which would be more learner friendly as well as a greater spread and variety of assessments. Some of the CA is embedded into class-time. Semester 6 is structured with the work placement (12 weeks) taking place from April to June and it is assessed on a Pass/ Fail basis and considered at the Autumn boards. Modules are taught as FAT modules. Students who want paid work placement tend to source own placements.

The panel queried if there is much use of case studies (real life assessment) in assessing students. Staff use the case study approach where students have to diagnose and analyse scenarios and produce solutions. They use problem based learning and a lot of role play –

dramaturgy. There is a move toward integrated projects that are reflective of work placement with simulated Office Space. The challenge is to excite and enthuse students.

Resource Needs

IT Sligo is in a favourable position for investment in resources. The refurbishment of the C & D blocks is to commence soon. There are 8 Computer labs (20-25 places per lab) available to students (including outside class hours), soon there will be access to virtual desktop and students can get Office suite from the Library.

Employment of graduates

Graduates are typically employed in small to medium enterprises. They are mainly in administration in Legal Practices, Small Consultancies, Multinationals and Public Sector. Graduates are expected to have strong skillset in Analytics, Front Office, Digital Marketing and should be independent thinkers able to manage information. The panel emphasised the importance of bookkeeping and payroll (students are unemployable if these skills are missing). There is a demand for Office Administrators but they need competencies in Accounting Software. There is an advantage if students have a strong competency in Excel and can do payroll in Excel. The majority of students are female, but the profile is changing slightly, currently 3:1 female:male ratio.

The panel asked for staff's view on the Alumni Association. The Alumni Association is not organised at the Institute. The panel recommended that the Department use existing links to build an Alumni group within the School or Department and to build on existing contacts. This could provide a fantastic opportunity to promote courses and inspire students and it gives student a great way to identify a career path. Staff/student relationships are a great way to inspire loyalty among graduates and fosters future links.

Student Retention

The retention rate was 13% in 2013/14. What process has the Department followed to improve retention rates? The Institute policy is to conduct exit interviews and financial hardship has a significant impact on retention with SUSI changes in back to education allowance. Some students have transferred to other courses within the college so they are not lost to the Institute but this is not reflected in the figures. Strategies to improve retention include "Away Days" more in-depth induction and to promote strengths of the course. They will seek to raise CAO Points to attract stronger students.

Student IT Competencies

IT related modules run through the 6 semesters. Areas covered in Semester 1 and Semester 2 include Introduction to Typing, Computer Systems and Computer Networks. Students learn about Reputation Management and Content Management by Semester 5 and Semester 6. They are also taught in Business Document Development, Effective Presentation, Digital Business Communication, IT Security and the benefits of Social Media. Students gain proficiency in Online Collaborations. Students will gain proficiency in Accounting and Payroll Software. The use of Microsoft Office Suite is embedded in modules, with a strong emphasis on Word and Excel. The panel suggested Outlook should be focused on as well. Other areas covered in the programme include Digital Content, microblogs website development, use of Dreamweaver and HTML Wordpress.com. Issues around copyright are covered in law modules.

Do Students leave with a portfolio of work?

This is not a formal process but Students encouraged to keep work and are helped to package it.

Summary of Findings

The panel complimented staff on their passion for the programme and recommended to Academic Council that it approve the Programme.

Panel Conditions

1. None

Panel Recommendations

1. To review assessment with the view to increase weighting of continuous assessment and encourage implementation of a wider variety of assessment methods.
2. The panel recommends to actively build an Alumni group within the Department using existing links.

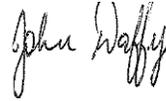
Signed on behalf of programme validation Panel



Gerard O'Donovan

Chairperson

Date: 25 May 2016



Mr John Daffy

Recording Secretary

Date: 25th May 2016