



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

Named Award:	Bachelor of Business
Programme Title(s):	Bachelor of Business in Retail and Customer Service Management Bachelor of Business in Event Management with Public Relations
Exit Award(s):	N/A
Award Type:	Ordinary Degree
Award Class:	Ordinary Degree
NFQ Level:	Level 7
ECTS / ACCS Credits:	180
Location:	Galway
Minor Award(s):	N/A

Panel Members

Name	Position	Organisation
Ann Campbell	Chairperson	DKIT
Aedin O'Hochá	Secretary	GMIT
Dr Sean Duffy	IOT Member	LYIT
Philip Smyth	University Member	Shannon Catering College
Laura Phelan	Professional Practitioner	Grooveyard
Elaine Bright-Jensen	Professional Practitioner	Brown Thomas
Laura Fahy	Institute Graduate	
Fiona O'Shea	Institute Graduate	

Programme Board Team

Deirdre Fahy	Colin Gilligan
Sally Reidy	Tom Edwards
Tom Conlon	Shane Durcan
Michelle Glynn	Marie Burke
Orla O'Doherty	Richard Nielson
Tomas Mangan	Diarmuid O' Conghaile
John Carty	George Finnegan

1 Introduction

The following report to Academic Council is a validation panel report from an expert panel of assessors on: Bachelor of Business Retail and Customer Service Management, Level 7 (3 years) and Bachelor of Business in Event Management with Public Relations, L7 (3 years),

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 (EPRG) was unable to consider the approval of the proposed level 8 awards. The EPRG focused on the review of the existing level 7 programmes and the proposed changes to these programmes.

It was noted that the College of Tourism and Arts is a diverse school with a wide variety of programmes. The college is seen as the leader within the Institute in facilitating work placement with many strong partnerships and links with industry. The Links Office is of considerable benefit to the college in this regard.

The EPRG recommends the proposed change to the programme title from the *Bachelor of Business in Retail and Customer Service Management* to the *Bachelor of Business in Retail Management*.

Some concern was expressed with regard to the work placement module and the quality of the work placements of some students. It is important that all students on placement have an equivalent learning experience regardless of where the placement is undertaken. Some recommendations in this regard are included in the body of this report.

The EPRG met with students from both programmes and their comments were largely positive. Students would like to see the addition of a level 8 award.

The EPRG felt that ethics and governance should be addressed in both programmes and that Retail Law should be a mandatory module on the BB in Retail and Customer Service Management.

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

Bachelor of Business in Retail and Customer Service Management, Level 7 (3 years) and Bachelor of Business in Event Management with Public Relations, Level 7 (3 years)

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/or 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

<i>Consideration for the panel:</i>	Is there evidence of reflection in the SERs of how the programmes performed since the last programmatic review.
<i>Overall Finding:</i>	Yes

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

Recommendation(s):

- Student feedback indicated that many students entering these programmes, particularly the BB in Event Management with Public Relations, did not fully understand what the programmes were about and that this led to a high drop out rate. It is recommended that more is done to ensure that prospective students understand what the programmes

entails so that they are better informed and better prepared when commencing the programme.

4.3 Award

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

Note:

- The programme design team plans to seek approval for an ab initio level 8 award to replace the existing level 7 Bachelor of Business in Event Management with Public Relations.
- It also proposes to seek approval for a one year add-on level 8 award in Retail Management.

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

Note:

- There are links with Sligo IT.

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 and Skills Innovation) and (ii) PASS} embedded in this programme? Evidence of other retention initiatives?
<i>Overall Finding:</i>	Yes

Recommendation(s):

- The programme team has proposed that the economics module in both programmes is moved to a later semester in the hope that this will have a positive impact on retention.

The EPRG recommend that this is monitored to see if the effect on retention is, in fact, positive.

- It is recommended that student retention is closely monitored and that initiatives are undertaken to support students and to improve student retention. A close eye should be kept on retention rates on an ongoing basis as opposed to periodic reviews.

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

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(s):

- A comprehensive edit of the proposed programme schedules is required to ensure that they are accurate and that stage requirements are clear to students and prospective students.
- The themes of ethics and governance should be mandatory in both programmes.
- Students have indicated that there is considerable overlap in what is taught in the Learning and Innovation Skills module and the Communications module. Perhaps an amalgamation of these two modules would leave room for the inclusion of an Ethics module.
- The appropriateness of the inclusion of Wine Studies as an elective should be reviewed. It is suggested that the inclusion of a module with a broader focus that addresses the key drivers in the retail sector generally would be more appropriate.
- Retail Law is currently an elective module, largely due to resource constraints. Consideration should be given to making this a mandatory, rather than an elective, module.
- Review the learning outcomes for the work placement module as they appear to be very generic.

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

Commendation(s):

- The EPRG commends the specialist training facilities available to students along with the access to technology which greatly aids students in their learning.

Recommendation(s):

- The programme of guest speakers should be expanded. The benefits of this would be twofold, a positive impact on student learning and prospective employers will become more aware of the programmes offered at GMIT.

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) :

- 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 programme assessment strategies should be modified to ensure more consistency in approach.
- At module level, the 30/70 split between continuous assessment and final exam should be reviewed with consideration being given to a higher continuous assessment weighting.

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

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

Note:

- It is noted that there is a research centre planned for September 2014. Some staff members are currently undertaking Masters or Ph.D. programmes in addition to presenting at conferences.

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

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

Recommendation(s):

- It is recommended that links with industry are developed internationally to increase the opportunity for students to undertake placements abroad where students may be exposed to better learning experiences.

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

Recommendation(s):

- With regard to the placement module, an emphasis should be put on the quality of the student placement. There needs to be greater discipline and structure around the placement with employers committing to developing the student.
- It is critical that there is sufficient oversight of the student placement to ensure that the student has a real learning experience on the ground.
- It is important that all students on placement have an equivalent learning experience regardless of where the placement is undertaken. Expectations should be clear and learning outcomes should be agreed with employers and students in advance of the commencement of the placement.
- There should be clear direction on how the work placement is to be assessed.
- Consideration should be given as to the optimum time to contact prospective employers e.g. retailers should not be approached with regard to work placements in the very busy periods of December and January.
- It is recommended that academic staff become more involved in sourcing placement opportunities along with the Links Office and in monitoring placements to ensure the quality of the student experience.
- Explore the possibility of international placements for students as they may get a better experience working in larger organisations that have more structure.
- Work experience should be paid where possible.

5.0 Module-Level Findings: General

With regard to the BB Retail and Customer Service Management, some modules, which had been core to the level 7 programme, have been removed with a view to including them in the fourth year of the proposed ab initio level 8 programme. The programme team assured the EPRG that the proposed changes to the level 7 programme stand, regardless of the approval or otherwise of the proposed ab initio level 8 programme.

The EPRG recommend that the Communications module be reviewed for any overlap in content with the Learning and Innovation Skills module. It is suggested that there may be room for the inclusion of a module in the area of ethics and governance.

The EPRG felt that the inclusion of a Wine Studies module as an elective put an emphasis on one retail sector over others. It is suggested that consideration be given to replacing the Wine Studies elective with a module focusing more broadly on the drivers in a variety of industries relevant to the retail sector.

Given the importance of ICT skills in event management, consideration should be given to making the IT and Digital Media modules mandatory rather than elective modules.

The EPRG have made a number of recommendations with regard to the Work Placement module. See section 4.15 above.

Recommendation(s):

- Review Communications and Learning and Innovation Skills modules with a view to removing any overlap in content.
- Consider making IT and Digital Media modules mandatory rather than elective.

- Review the inclusion of Wine Studies as an elective and consider including a module with a broader focus on key drivers in a variety of retail areas.
- Consider including a mandatory module in both programmes that address ethics and governance
- Consider making Retail Law a mandatory module.
- See section 4.15 for recommendations relating to the Work Placement module.

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

Recommendation(s):

- Consider the inclusion of more Continuous Assessments and a reweighting of the 30/70 CA/final exam split.

5.2 Module Level-Findings: Specific Named Modules

5.2.1 Module (Communications)

Note:

- Proposed module title change to Interpersonal Skills.

5.2.2 Module (Consumer Behaviour)

Note:

- Proposed module title change to Retail Consumer Behaviour

5.2.3 Module (Introduction to Accountancy)

Note:

- Proposed new module title - Introduction to Accounting and Business Maths.

5.2.4 Module (Wine Studies)

Recommendation(s):

- Suggest replacing the Wine Studies elective with a module focusing on the different retail industries.

5.2.5 Module (Information Technology)

Note:

- Proposed change to module title to Information Technology Essentials & Information Technology

5.2.6 Module (Operations Management)

Note:

- Proposed new module title - Retail Buying

5.2.7 Module (Introduction to Business Law)

Note:

- Proposed module title change to - Introduction to Hospitality Law

5.2.8 Module (Train the Trainer)

Note:

- Proposed module title change to - Train the Trainer for Retail

5.2.9 Module (Management Information Systems)

Note:

- Proposed module title change to - Retail Management Information Systems

5.2.10 Module (Retail Finance)

Note:

- Proposed module title change to - Managerial Retail Finance

5.2.11 Module (Retail Legislation)

Note:

- Proposed module title change to Retail Law

5.2.12 Module (Retail Marketing)

Note:

- Proposed module title change to - Retail Services Marketing

5.2.13 Module (Introduction to Economics)

Note:

- Proposed module title change to - Economics

5.2.14 Module (Introduction to the Event Industry)

Note:

- Proposed module title change to Introduction to Event Studies.

5.2.15 Module (Hospitality Operations)

Note:

- Proposed module title change to - Event Operations

5.2.16 Module (Communications)

Note:

- Proposed module title change to - Communications and Customer Care

5.2.17 Module (Sports Events)

Note:

- Proposed Module Title change to - Sports Event Management

5.2.18 Module (Learning to Learn)

Recommendation(s):

- The Learning to Learn module (Learning and Skills Innovation) should be adapted so that it is geared specifically to the programme.
- Given student feedback, consideration should be increasing the time given to addressing plagiarism and referencing.

6.0 Student Findings

The EPRG met with a mix of students from the Bachelor of Business in Retail and Customer Service Management and the Bachelor of Business in Event Management and Public Relations. Student feedback included the following:

- Students found the 'first year experience' to be helpful and supportive to students. Overall it was a positive experience.
- Many incoming students are not adequately informed about what the programmes are really about and this leads to high drop out rates.
- Students would prefer more continuous assessments as they feel they learn a lot more than from final exams.
- Students appeared to be unclear as to the role of the class representative.
- Students on the BB in Event Management with Public Relations felt that they would benefit from more practical skills, e.g. how to use equipment such as AV equipment.
- Students would like to be better informed about what is "coming down the track" in terms of programme content.
- Students felt that there was a lot of overlap between the Learning to Learn module and the Communications module. Students also felt that the Learning to Learn module should be geared more specifically to the programme it is a part of and that more time should be given to addressing plagiarism and referencing. The training in how to use the library effectively was seen as invaluable.
- It was also suggested that input from a greater number of guest speakers would be really beneficial in giving students real insight into what is involved in setting up a real event e.g. someone from the Galway Arts Festival. Input from guest speakers to the retail programme would also be really helpful.
- The feedback in relation to the work experience module was mixed. Some students had a very positive experience with one describing her experience on placement in the US as "amazing". Others had rather negative experiences with some being left to stack shelves and clean floors. One student commented that if she had not been very proactive in asking

for a range of experiences while on placement that she would have been left doing the same job for the entire placement.

- Students commented on the fact that they felt they were very tight for time upon returning from the work placement, as there were lots of continuous assessments in a short space of time.
- Students felt the addition of an honours degree programme (level 8) would be beneficial.

7.0 Stakeholder Engagement

No concerns were raised in relation to 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

Note:

- Following feedback from students and industry stakeholders, the programme board plans to seek approval for an ab initio level 8 award to replace the existing level 7 Bachelor of Business in Event Management with Public Relations.
- It is also proposed to seek approval for a one year add-on level 8 award in Retail Management.

Validation Panel Report Approved By:

Signed:



Anne Campbell
Chairperson

Date:

23.4.2015