



Institute of Technology Sligo
INSTITIÚID TEICNEOLAÍOCHTA SLIGEACH

PROGRAMME VALIDATION REPORT

DATE OF EVALUATION 19th May 2016

PROGRAMME EVALUATED Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Business in Insurance Practice
Level 8

Unique Programme reference Number PRN: SG_BINSU_H08

Panel of Assessors

Mr Tom Cullivan,
(Chairperson) Retired HETAC Secretary,
Knockavaddy,
Furbo,
Spiddal,
Co Galway
Email: farwestern@eircom.ie

Prof. Ian Jamieson, OBE Retired Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching)
University of Bath
UK
I.M.Jamieson@bath.ac.uk

Mr James Collins Head of Department Business and Sport
Limerick Institute of Technology

Ms. Nuala O'Connor, Insurance Training and Events Consultant
23 Clonmore Manor,
Lisburn,
Co. Antrim,
BT27 4EW.
Email: nuala@northerninsurancetraining.com

Mr. Maik Braun Head of Apprenticeship Training

Allianz Germany

Mr Kai Hornung

Apprenticeship Regional Manager
Allianz Germany

Ms. Annica Rasmark

Acting Education Development and Quality Manager
Institute of Technology Sligo
Ash Lane
Sligo
Email : rasmark.annica@itsligo.ie

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: Perry Share

Head of Department: Fergal Keane

Head of Department: Michael Barrett

Sandra Harvey-Graham (Insurance Institute Apprenticeship programme manager)

The Chair introduced the panel and welcomed the School Management.

The Registrar gave a brief overview of the Institutes current apprenticeships. He alluded to the short time frame in setting up this programme and the involvement of external bodies and the constraint it put on aspects of the path forward.

Head of School presented the School plan and introduced the 5 points of Excellence, Educational, Employability, Engagement and Enquiry on which the plan was structured. He explained that the School of Business and Social Sciences have worked closely with industry partners previously, e.g. the Prison Service, Masonite and NIBRT. A similar programme was developed for the Prison Service where their existing induction programme was incorporated in to a blended learning L6 Certificate. Over 700 prison officers went through this Programme. This gave staff a good grounding in working with work-based learning where co-teaching and cooperation are of significant importance.

The Programme team explained the background to the programme and the path that had been undertaken to arrive here today. Step 1 was to identify the business skill needed by employees in the industry and the need for them to understand how the commercial world works. Step two was to find an education provider and this is where IT Sligo entered the frame. The IT Sligo modules were a good fit with the current insurance modules and they were able to adapt

modules to have an insurance focus. The insurance modules would be at the heart of the new programme with the business skills modules wrapped around it.

The reasoning behind the initial intake of 100 students is mainly due to the Government allocating funding of this number of places. The places should deliver a fair representation both geographically and within different segments of the industry. The programme aims to be industry relevant but complemented by academic backing to convince students to choose Insurance as a profession.

All L8 modules have been newly written and the three-year L8 is modelled on the Institute's BA in Accounting L8. It was highlighted that all involved School of Business and Social Science staff had delivered programmes online before. The online lecturing is a key component for the national rollout both from the view of the student and the employer as it means the student can remain in the office and do one day of online lectures from there. There will be two face to face sessions per semester. There will also be face to face meetings between the mentors and the employers.

The Programme team informed the panel that the Institute's Quality manual would need to be updated as there will be industry members on the Programme board. In addition, a steering group will be established with representation from the industry included.

A panel member queried the decision to roll out an honours degree, as when compared with the English context all apprenticeships are at L6 or L7. A member of the Programme team explained how they wanted to offer more than the current L7 industry qualification and the addition of business skills would be attractive both to students and employers. The insurance industry would welcome a new higher academic qualification for their employees to avail of. The panel understood the rationale behind this.

The panel was concerned of the short time frame in which the programme was put together and the lead-time for it to be available to students. They asked if compromises been made due to the time pressure and stated that more elective options would have been welcomed. The Programme team explained that two people had been fully dedicated to this project and would continue to be so. They acknowledged the challenge the time frame imposed on them but it was of benefit that many of the modules were already in existence. It was likely that the programme would evolve with time and that electives could be possible but one had to be conscious of the fact that it may not due to industry needs and standards. A panel member commended the speed and flexibility with which the programme was developed and explained that they were undertaking a redevelopment of apprenticeship provision in their country and with the constraints that are imposed it would take several years to achieve a redesigned programme. They expressed this as a significant advantage of the Irish apprenticeship structure.

A panel member wondered would it be a lesser risk to have a smaller first intake to ensure quality and success. A member of the Programme team responded that this had been discussed in the Steering Group but the September 2016 start date was in response to industry demand.

The panel wished to explore how students are going to be selected as this was not apparent from the submission documentation. The answer was given that companies will select the students. Companies will be closely screened and peer checked and it was imperative that companies selected would give support and study leave to their employees. It was asked what would happen if demand went beyond IT Sligo capacity. The response was that while there

would be only one approved programme, other providers could be brought on board by using a differentiation validation process.

Staff was asked what the commitment was from companies to students who undertake this programme and what were the incentives. The Programme team explained that the apprentice would be competent in two insurance areas within Year 2 of the programme and Year 3 would shape them towards a more specific role within the company and a more permanent contract. They would encourage the managers in companies to see the work students have done and they would be able to publish some of their efforts/work.

One panel member had strong concern of the mixing of levels of modules within the approved course schedule. There were L6 modules on year 2 and L7 modules on year 1. He queried if this was in line with QQI policy, and should you not have 60 credits at L6, 60 credits at L7 and 60 credits at L8. The Registrar quoted a document from QQI showing they are mainly focused on the award year being filled with only L8 modules and although not prescriptive this was the approach IT Sligo takes.

Staff in the insurance industry will teach the insurance modules, but staff will be hired as part-time staff with IT Sligo. The work based assessment will be Pass/Fail and assessed by the employer supervisor according to a framework provided and approved by III and IT Sligo and uploaded to ITS learner management system for verification by IT Sligo.

A question was raised of what would happen in the scenario of an apprentice leaving or being given redundancy. In this scenario an apprentice would have to find a new employer and they could continue the programme if the employer was approved. The Industry steering group was committed to placing redundant apprentices with other companies should a company close.

Meeting with the programme development team

Attendees:

Colette Armstrong	Susan Leonard
Kate Brown	Mairead McCann
Clodagh Cashlin	Catherine McGuinn
John Creed	Siobhain O'Connor
Jean Darcy (Allianz Ireland)	David O'Halloran
Aine Doherty	Cillian O'Murchu
Stephen Dunne (III)	Gary Reynolds
Elaine Hayes (Zurich Ireland)	Emer Ward
Fergal Keane	Ruth Walsh
Marie Keane	Siobhan Wynne (III)
Sandra Harvey-Graham (III)	Michael Barrett

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

A panel member said the documentation was strong on research and cutting edge, but when he reviewed the references and reading lists they did not read as L8 material and there were very few academic journals listed nor did it include the insurance technical documentation referred to. In addition, the referencing of material was poor in many places. The Head of Department

responded that more material was available on Moodle but needed to be transferred to the module descriptors.

Another issue with the submission documentation was brought up, as the panel felt there was little reference made to transferable skills or embedded awards. Staff explained that there were embedded awards in the existing Insurance qualifications. The credits earned for the IT Sligo modules can also be used for progressing within the ladder system. The panel strongly recommended for this to be included in the submission as this is an important selling point. A representative from the Insurance industry specified that students at the end of year 1 would be "Approved Product Advisors", and by the end of second year they would be approved to give advice on issues in all areas. At the end of year three, the students would have an industry qualification, an academic qualification and considerable work experience. The student would also have completed a statutory apprenticeship.

The panel said they still needed further clarification on the entry requirements for the Programme, it was confusing them whether this was a CAO offering or not. The Programme team responded that the technical entry requirements were as per the CAO, however, this did not reflect the mechanism for actual recruitment. Students will be recruited under an employment contract with the employer, and these apprentices would need to meet the standard minimum entry requirements for a level 8 programme.

Zurich Ireland explained the traineeship programme they ran in conjunction with Wexford Education and Training Board (ETB), which had been a great success and was similar to that of the apprenticeship. The Programme team explained that the target group would be 60-70% school leavers and the remaining students would comprise of students who had dropped out of other courses, people looking to retrain and some current members of the industry. This programme would help to attract new talent to the industry. The recruitment process is very structured and they work closely with the companies to ensure the right fit for the organisation and that the student is able for a L8 qualification. They agreed that this year's intake might have a slightly different cohort, as it will be too late for this year's leaving certificate students to apply.

The panel queried whether the online learning was equal to face to face learning. Staff explained that once you have some face to face occasions per semester the blended learning will be equal and can be as engaging as standard lecturing. The two face to face days per semester would consist of: Day 1 – Induction and team exercises to help students work as group and engage in the online learning. The fact that they are already in a working environment will make it easier for them to absorb this learning. In addition to the days in IT Sligo, students would be visited by IT Sligo staff in the work place regularly.

The issue of quality control for staff in the insurance companies was discussed. A Programme team member detailed how IT Sligo led training would be provided for supervisors and mentors dealing with students in companies. The students would also be receiving training in the process to understand their own role better. The panel said that there was a need for IT Sligo to ensure that all employers treat the students equally.

A panel member queried the use of external examiners for both IT Sligo modules and for insurance modules. Staff clarified that IT Sligo modules falls within the quality control as detailed in the IT Sligo quality manual, and the insurance modules come under the UCD quality control system. The panel suggested for this to be detailed in the submission documentation.

The panel asked if there would be international opportunities for students. The Programme team answered that they would aspire to provide those opportunities and the online learning element facilitates this. Some of the companies that have signed up to the programme are global companies.

A panel member queried the assessment method for the work based element of the course. Staff answered that the company trainer would receive guidelines with model answers and it was assessed as pass/fail. Case studies would be uploaded to Moodle and reviewed by IT Sligo lecturers. Staff would also visit the employers to ensure consistency across the board.

Staff was asked by the panel about resourcing apart from the dedicated programme managers involved. They answered that existing resources were used for this programme and staff were understanding and responsive to the needs of industry. All the new modules had been delivered without additional time allocated to them.

The panel queried the apparent lack of insurance modules in the final year of the programme. Staff answered that the Capstone project had to be insurance based and that all modules would have an insurance specific focus, e.g. LAW08014 would deal with insurance case law. The panel pointed out this was not visible to the reader and recommended to avoid wording such as "Introductory" in a L8 module. There were also housekeeping issues with a mixture of semesters showing in the approved course schedule.

The Department staff gave a demonstration to the panel of the online technologies and the panel found them appropriate and had confidence in their application to the delivery of the programme.

Summary of Findings

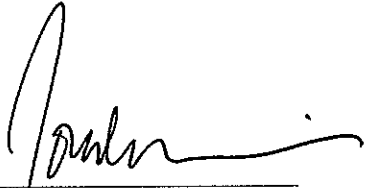
The Panel recommends to Academic Council that it approve the Programme. It commends the Institute on the speed at which this innovative Programme was put together.

Panel Conditions

1. Ensure the inclusion of L6 and L7 modules in Year 1 and 2 two years is compliant with QQI standards. If not these modules should be rewritten to appropriate level.

Panel Recommendations

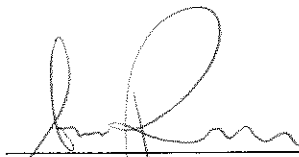
1. Entry requirements clearly defined and stated
2. It is recommended that the any changes to the new Apprenticeship legislation be reflect in Programme documentation.
3. Reading list within module description are updated and properly referenced
4. Capstone project in award year be on a topic related to insurance
5. Module titles be reviewed e.g. LAW08014 module deletion of word Introduction
6. That the embedded Industry qualifications be clearly stated in the Programme documentation
7. The role and the appointment of Extern Examiners to be reflected in the Programme Documentation



Mr Tom Cullivan

Chairperson

Date: 20 May 2016



Ms Annica Rasmark

Recording Secretary

Date: 20 May 2016