



**Institute of Technology Sligo  
INSTITIÚID TEICNEOLAÍOCHTA SLIGEACH**

**PROGRAMME VALIDATION REPORT**

**DATE OF EVALUATION** 25<sup>th</sup> May 2016

**PROGRAMME EVALUATED** Certificate in Introductory Counselling Skills L6

**Unique Programme reference Number PRN:** SG\_PCOUN\_S06

**Panel of Assessors**

**Chair:** Dr Marian O'Sullivan, *Director General, Institute of Public Administration*

**Panel members:** Gerry Hone, *Office of the Area Manager, Child and Family Agency, Sligo/Leitrim/West Cavan*

Mary Kelly, *Programme Director, Primary Education, Hibernia College*

Dr Fiona Dukelow, *School of Applied Social Studies, UCC*

Dr Dan Rogers, *The Innovation Academy, Trinity College Dublin*

**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:

Dr Breda McTaggart     Anna Fewer-Hamilton  
John Keane                Orla Walsh  
Patrick Broderick

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

### **Programme design, modifications and title and rationale**

**Panel:** Is this a Certificate or a Higher Certificate?

**Staff:** It was clarified that it is Certificate when it went to the Planning and Coordination committee of the Academic Council.

**Panel:** Explain the title of the programme and the use of the word Introductory?

**Staff:** The title reflects the level of skills, this is why it is called Introductory.

**Panel:** Why is the SPA mentioned in the title?

**Staff:** Students can exit after one year with 30 credits. Main objective is 60 ECTS credits, but if there is an exit award it is a SPA 30 credits.

Panel recommended that this is specified that it is first year and the same modules that make the SPA award.

**Panel:** Why an entry requirement of 23 years of age?

**Staff:** It would be considered that people would have a certain degree of maturity, mid 20's would be an indicator. Life experience and maturity is desirable.

**Panel:** Is this entry requirement standard practice for these types of programmes?

**Staff:** Yes. Social Care programme – counselling skills and other programmes, would be embedded in the full time programme.

Panel recommended keeping in mind that they are not limiting the number of candidates, this a sort of a taster type programme.

**Panel:** Are interview criteria documented with a scoring sheet and feedback mechanism for the applicant?

**Staff:** The programme will not be on CAO and the first intake will be 2016. There are restrictions on who can enter the course. Students will have Leaving Cert or equivalent qualification for Level 6 entry.

**Panel:** Does the programme reflect QQI guidelines?

**Staff:** It is mapped to QQI standards.

**Panel:** What consultation took place with Psychotherapy Training Institutes?

**Staff:** There was feedback from local providers. There will be close adherence to the QQI procedures.

The Panel recommended the Department to align this programme closely to the existing programmes. A lot of change is happening in those courses and it is important you keep them close in line with QQI, as there are statutory regulations.

### **Employment of graduates**

**Panel:** When students complete the programme, what will they use the qualification for?

**Staff:** They are not going to be counsellors but it will help to advance their career in other areas.

**Panel:** Is this programme an entry pathway to other programmes?.

**Staff:** The Department may allow RPL to some of the programmes. It will link into other programmes across the country. Lecturers are often approached by students, for waiting lists for counsellors, so this course will be in demand.

### **Learning Outcomes**

The panel reviewed the Learning Outcomes.

**Staff:** A blended option is the preferred option. The programme is delivered one day every 2 weeks. There are 6 hours of therapy required. The student will organise this while they are studying as part of the course. A list of credited therapists will be provided. A statement from the students' therapist will confirm that this requirement has been completed.

The Panel recommended the inclusion of information to students that there would be extra cost for the 6 weeks of therapy.

Panel recommended that the Department map student hours.

**Panel:** The document states that students should be working in coaching in the community. Students could be involved in for example sports but their paid work might not be related. The panel recommended to remove the criteria which states you need to be working in the environment.

### **Resource Needs**

**Panel:** The staff were asked if adequate resources are available to run this programme.

**Staff:** The Department would not be allowed to run it without sufficient resourcing. There are no restrictions for Library resources.

**Panel:** Are students who study part-time allowed access to full time resources in particular to counselling services and resources from the Access office.

**Staff:** There is a student rep for part-time students. There is flexibility and students' needs are reviewed on a case by case basis.

### **Summary of Findings**

The panel recommends the Certificate in Counselling Skills to the Academic Council and commend the Department on a very innovative programme.

### **Panel Conditions**

1. None.

### Panel Recommendations

1. The panel recommends the Department reviews the entry requirement with a view to change down the age from 23 to 21 years.
2. The inclusion of information to students that there would be extra cost for the 6 weeks of therapy.
3. The panel recommendeds that the Department map student hours.
4. To remove the criteria which states students need to be working in the environment.

Signed on behalf of programme validation Panel



Marian O'Sullivan

Chairperson

Date: 25<sup>th</sup> May 2016



Ms Eileen Curley

Recording Secretary

Date: 25<sup>th</sup> May 2016