Programme Review

Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Social and Community Development
BN115

Department of Humanities

Peer-review panel report

24th May 2013
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1. Executive summary

1.1. The Department of Humanities, Institute of Technology Blanchardstown undertook a review of its social and community development suite of programmes. Resulting from this review a submission document was produced outlining proposed changes to the content and structure of the programmes. An external peer-review expert panel was established by the Registrar. This panel met on the 23rd May 2013 to consider the submission document and to meet with academic staff responsible for the management and delivery of the programmes. This report identifies the findings of this peer-review expert panel.

1.2. The overall recommendation of the panel was that all proposed changes to the programme structure, existing syllabi and proposed new syllabi made in the submission document be accepted. The panel recommended that the suite of social and community development programmes be accredited until the next programmatic review. Some specific conditions and recommendations have been made in the light of continuous improvement in this report to qualify the scope of this overall recommendation.

1.3. The panel was impressed with the proposed new offering and of the opinion that the more practice based focus would produce graduates of immediate value to the community development sector. The panel commended the staff of the Department on the depth of consultation undertaken in the programme redesign and for the quality of the documentation and the level of open and frank dialogue throughout the various engagements during the visit.

2. Preamble

2.1. The Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Social and Community Development programme was originally validated in 2009. In 2010 the School of Business and Humanities, Institute of Technology Blanchardstown undertook a review of its programmes as per Institute policy relating to institutional review and particularly the monitoring and evaluation of academic programmes. Because the programme had only been validated the previous year it was not reviewed at that time. Experience gained in delivering this programme to date from the perspective of lecturers, students and practitioners with whom we are engaged, pointed to areas for improvement, in particular the need to expand and intensify the fieldwork component of the programme.

2.2. The peer-review group produced a report of their findings (this document) and this will be reported to the Academic Council of the Institute as per agreed quality assurance policy and procedures.
3. Social and community development programmes under review

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Banner code</th>
<th>ITB code</th>
<th>Programme title</th>
<th>Award title</th>
<th>NFQ level / ECTS credits</th>
<th>Format</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BN_HSACD_8</td>
<td>BN115</td>
<td>Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Social and Community Development</td>
<td>Bachelor of Arts (Honours)</td>
<td>NFQ level 8 240 credits</td>
<td>Ab initio</td>
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Embedded awards

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<th>Banner code</th>
<th>ITB code</th>
<th>Programme title</th>
<th>Award title</th>
<th>NFQ level / ECTS credits</th>
<th>Format</th>
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<tr>
<td>BN_HSACD_7</td>
<td>BN025</td>
<td>Bachelor of Arts in Social and Community Development</td>
<td>Bachelor of Arts</td>
<td>NFQ level 7 180 credits</td>
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<tr>
<td>BN_HSACD_C</td>
<td>BN036</td>
<td>Higher Certificate in Arts in Social and Community Development</td>
<td>Higher Certificate in Arts</td>
<td>NFQ level 6 120 credits</td>
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<td>BN_HSACD_D</td>
<td>BN313</td>
<td>Bachelor of Arts in Social and Community Development</td>
<td>Bachelor of Arts</td>
<td>NFQ level 7 60 credits</td>
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<td>BN_HSACD_B</td>
<td>BN415</td>
<td>Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Social and Community Development</td>
<td>Bachelor of Arts (Honours)</td>
<td>NFQ level 8 60 credits</td>
<td>Add on to BN025</td>
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4. Peer-review panel

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Ann Campbell</td>
<td>Registrar Dundalk Institute of Technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. Marian Fitzgibbon</td>
<td>Head of School of Humanities Athlone Institute of Technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. Teresa Nyland</td>
<td>Team Leader in Community Development Health Service Executive</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. Carmel Gallagher</td>
<td>School of Social Sciences and Law Dublin Institute of Technology</td>
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Ms. Ann Campbell kindly agreed to chair this panel.

Also in attendance:

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<tr>
<td>Dr. Diarmuid O’Callaghan</td>
<td>Registrar Institute of Technology Blanchardstown</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr. Michael Keane</td>
<td>Quality Assurance Officer Institute of Technology Blanchardstown</td>
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5. **Consultation**

5.1. Management consulted during panel meeting:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mr. Pat O’Connor</td>
<td>Head of School of Business and Humanities</td>
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<td>Dr. Celesta McCann James</td>
<td>Head of Department of Humanities</td>
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5.2. Academic staff consulted during panel meeting:

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<tr>
<td>Mr. Liam McGlynn</td>
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<td>Dr. Ruth Harris</td>
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<td>Dr. Bríd ní Chonaill</td>
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<td>Ms. Joanie Cousins</td>
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<td>Mr. Tom Donohoe</td>
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<td>Mr. Gael Le Roux</td>
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<td>Ms. Mary O’Reilly</td>
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<td>Ms. Lavinia McLean</td>
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<td>Mr. Aiden Carthy</td>
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<td>Ms. Denise Lyons</td>
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<td>Ms. Pamela Kelly</td>
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<td>Mr. Kevin Murphy</td>
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<td>Mr. Cormac Doran</td>
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<td>Ms. Deirdre Bonar</td>
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5.3. Students:

All current cohorts of social and community development students were consulted in preparing the submission document.

5.4. Industry:

Consultation in preparing the submission document with fieldwork partners, local community & voluntary sector and education sector included:

- RAPID Programme Fingal County Council
- RAPID, Department of Social Protection
- Mountview Family Resource Centre, Dublin 15
- Community Education Facilitators, Co. Dublin VEC
- Blanchardstown Traveller Development Group
- Fingal County Council, Older Persons Support Project
- Adult Key Skills Education Service, Co. Dublin VEC
- Ladyswell National School
- St. Philip’s Senior National School, Mountview
- Community Liaison Officers, Fingal County Council
6. **Documentation submitted for consideration**

6.1.1. The submission document outlined the following:

- Rationale for programme review
- Consultation
- Employment and career opportunities for graduates
- Progression opportunities for graduates
- Resource implications
- Current context of community development in Ireland
- Profile of current intake of social and community development students
- Current programme content and structure
- Proposed revised content and structure including new modules not previously validated
- Curricula vitae of relevant academic staff within the Department of Humanities
- Fieldwork procedures and guidelines
- Transition arrangements for repeat students
- Relevant Institute policies and procedures
7. **Private panel meeting:**

7.1. It was noted that the programmatic review process is part of a suite of quality assurance processes agreed with QQI (formerly HETAC) and in accordance with the provisions of Section 28 of the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999. This process involves self-evaluation with recommendations of amendments to the existing approved course schedule with associated justification.

7.2. As per agreed procedure, the Registrar acted as secretary to the group.

7.3. It was noted that the Academic Council has responsibility for ensuring that recommendations of this panel report are implemented.

7.4. The Chair presented the context of the panel review and noted that the purpose of programmatic review is to:

   - Facilitate a reflective self-evaluation within the relevant Department to allow a critical evaluation of a programme and its constituent embedded awards with consideration of this self-evaluation by a panel of peers drawn from education and industry;
   - Facilitate a review of all matters pertaining to the management and delivery of a programme indicating how they have been updated in light of changing environmental conditions and recent knowledge.

7.5. The roles and responsibilities of the panel as listed in Institute policy document 2MP17 “Roles and responsibilities of external experts on validation and review panels” were noted.

8. **Meeting with Head of School, Head of Department and Programme Leaders:**

8.1. The Head of Department of Humanities outlined to the panel the rationale for the proposed revised content and structure of the programme giving a brief overview of the consultation undertaken.

8.2. Two clear aims of the proposed revised programme were identified by the programme leaders namely:

   8.2.1. Expand the practice-based, fieldwork component of the programme.
   8.2.2. Rationalise and consolidate the number of modules both mandatory and elective.

A lengthy discussion followed with regard to the proposed fieldwork components within which the panel sought further clarification on the defined roles and responsibilities of the fieldwork coordinator, fieldwork supervisor and the assessment of these components. Placement preparation from the viewpoint of the student, agency supervisors and ITB supervisors was discussed in addition to the availability of adequate numbers of placement opportunities to accommodate expected student numbers. The rationale behind the scheduling, number and duration of the fieldwork components was discussed with the design team believing that as proposed
it provided the student with the best blend of theory, practice and reflection. The panel asked that early warning indicators be built into the fieldwork policy document to help identify and provide intervention relating to fieldwork issues. The panel stressed the importance of providing students with opportunities to discuss/present their fieldwork experiences in smaller group settings to maximise collective learning opportunities. The issue of compliance with Institute policy relating to Garda Vetting (2MP24) was raised by the panel who recommended that the entry requirements and associated published programme information clearly articulate student responsibility regarding same. The panel requested that alternative arrangements be clearly defined with regard to students who could not, for whatever reason, successfully complete the fieldwork components. These are to include both exit awards and repeat arrangements. Whereby the fieldwork components are not used in the calculation of the award of a student’s GPA the panel requested that the number of credits used be clearly articulated to reflect same. The programme leaders expressed their confidence in being able to provide placement opportunities through their extensive network of contacts within the sector. A fieldwork policy and guidelines document was presented to the panel.

The rationalisation of modules and the elimination of the existing strands offered to students in years 3 and 4 were discussed in detail with the panel in agreement that the level of electives and content as previously offered reflected a level of specialisation that may be more appropriate to postgraduate study and that the proposed changes provide a more coherent programme with a clearer identity.

8.3 Transition arrangements

The panel noted the programme leaders’ wish not only to offer the proposed new version of the programme to the next intake of students in September 2013 but to allow the current cohort of registered first and second year students to also transfer to the new curriculum. A lengthy discussion followed with the panel of the opinion that anyone having applied through the CAO for admission to the current programme as marketed would need to be written to in advance of their offer of a place informing them of the revised programme content and structure. The panel also requested that arrangements be clearly defined to accommodate current students in this transition process and that a letter of agreement be signed by all students to indicate their acceptance of the transfer and new curriculum as proposed. The panel also noted the transition arrangements as presented with regard to students having to repeat modules no longer being offered in the proposed new version of the programme.
8.4 External accreditation

The panel noted that a new Interim Endorsement Body had been set up on a pilot basis by a group of practitioners, academics and trainers in the community development sector in Ireland but endorsement from same had not been applied for at this time. Programme leaders informed the panel that contact had been made and that this would be followed up upon post programme review.

8.5 Family support

The role of family support was highlighted by the panel as having critical input in community development. The panel was also of the opinion that the programme content should reflect the emerging role and responsibility of community and voluntary sector organisations as lead agencies under the National Service Delivery Plan. The potential of the arts was also raised by the panel in cultural animation, job creation and as an approach in advocating for the sector.

9. Meeting with academic staff:

9.1. Teaching and learning

Through discussion with the lecturing staff the panel concluded that a coherent teaching and learning philosophy across the programme as a whole was lacking and felt that this needed to be addressed at departmental level by defining a clear teaching and learning strategy specific for this programme.

9.2. Assessment

The panel stressed the importance of a programme assessment strategy and recommended that one be defined to provide clear guidance on the number and type of assessments per module and maximise the potential use of integrative assessments. The panel also pointed out the lack of definition within module syllabi regarding assessment events and requested that this be addressed through Coursebuilder. The panel recommended that HETAC policy “Assessment and Standards” (2009), be referenced by all staff to provide guidance on best practice relating to assessment. The panel was also of the opinion that more integrative assessments could be used to strengthen the attainment of the programme learning outcomes.

9.3. Themes

The panel concurred that intergenerational and life course perspectives should be central themes across the programme. These could be embedded
in theoretical modules, for example community development, sociology, social policy, psychology through inclusion of the following concepts: intergenerational relationships, intergenerational solidarity, lifelong learning and transitions across the life course. The panel also recommended a more explicit focus on values in the programme and was of the opinion that more clearly identified learning outcomes and teaching strategies should facilitate students to reflect on their own values and traditions and to develop their values over the course of the programme. The use of social media and related ethical considerations was discussed as a mechanism for change and in engaging communities with the panel of the opinion that an Institute policy on same be drafted and incorporated into fieldwork preparation. The panel also stressed the importance of the role of advocacy and the need for it to permeate throughout the programme in promoting the potential of community development.

9.4 New modules

The following modules, not previously validated, were considered by the panel and following discussion were deemed to be relevant and appropriate for this programme and level of the award.

SACD H1023 Law, Crime and Community
SACD H1024 Community Development Practice 1
SACD H2029 Sociology of Education
SACD H2030 Community Development Practice 2
SACD H2031 Community Response to Drug Use 1
SACD H2032 Fieldwork 1
SACD H2033 Fieldwork Portfolio 1
SACD H3035 Community Development Practice 3
SACD H3046 Social Entrepreneurship / Funding
SACD H3044 Applied Psychology
SACD H3040 Community Response to Drug Use 2
SACD H3041 Fieldwork 2
SACD H3042 Fieldwork Portfolio 2
SACD H3045 Skills for Professional Practice
SACD H4043 Professional Practice: The Reflective Practitioner
SACD H4035 Social Policy / Analysis
SACD H4033 Sustainable Development
SACD H4041 Community Mental Health
SACD H4036 Power and Inequality
SACD H4037 Global Development
SACD H4039 Adult and Community Education
SACD H4038 Advocacy and Community Organisation
SACD H4032 Drug Prevention Strategies
SACD H4040 Conflict Resolution and Mediation
10. Decision of the panel

The panel recommended all proposed changes for approval subject to the following specific conditions and recommendations:

10.1. Conditions

10.1.1. Letter of agreement to be signed by each student within the existing cohorts of students signaling their agreement to the transfer to the new curriculum.

10.1.2. CAO applicants to be written to in advance of offers being made informing them of the updated curriculum for this programme.

10.1.3. Early warning indicators be built into the fieldwork policy document to identify and provide intervention relating to fieldwork issues.

10.2. Recommendations

10.2.1. Update Coursebuilder, the submission document and related programme documentation to comply with Institute policy and procedures relating to:

- Entry requirements (relating to garda vetting)
- Progression (relating to fieldwork)
- Teaching and learning strategy
- Terminology of module learning outcomes
- Mapping of module learning outcomes to programme learning outcomes
- Programme assessment strategy and aligning module assessment events to same, integrative assessments, assessment event descriptors and the linking of module learning outcomes to individual assessment events

10.2.2. Clearly articulate all transfer/transition arrangements for existing students transferring to the new curriculum.

10.2.3. Provide clarity on the assessment event to be completed by students unable to complete the fieldwork component wishing to exit with a Higher Certificate award.

10.2.4. Clarify the number of credits to be used in the award calculation for each stage of the programme.

10.2.5. Develop a policy document relating to the use of social media and incorporate as part of the fieldwork preparation.

10.2.6. Make other technical and minor amendments as discussed at the panel meeting.
11. **Panel observations**

   The panel commended the high quality of the documentation submitted for review, the open and frank dialogue and enthusiasm of staff and the obvious dedication of staff to the ethos of continuous improvement.

12. **Signatures**

   **Chair**
   
   Ms. Ann Campbell ___________________________ Date ____________

   **Secretary**
   
   Dr. Diarmuid O’Callaghan _______________________ Date ____________