

Validation Report



BN715

Certificate in Psychological Studies

Introduction

The mission of the Institute is to serve its students and the community by meeting the skills needs in the economy and increasing the level of participation in third-level education and training, particularly in Dublin North-West and its environs. The Institute will do this:

- by achieving consistently high standards of relevance and quality in teaching, research, development and consultancy, and
- by offering a welcoming and supportive environment to students from all educational and social backgrounds, and to adults wishing to increase their level of technical skills.

The Institute has developed an active adult continuing education programme to provide education and training that is relevant and responsive to economic and social needs both locally and nationally and is committed to both lifelong learning and second-chance education.

The Institute in 2006 was awarded delegated authority enabling the development, validation, implementation and continuous improvement of its existing taught higher education and training programmes up to and including level 9 of the National Framework of Qualifications.

It is Institute policy to validate all academic programmes offered by the Institute, and in so doing, indicate award and programme title, academic level by relating them to the National Framework of Qualifications and volume of learning by allocating ECTS¹ credits to the programme.

The purpose of this document is to report on the findings of the peer review panel established to validate this proposed programme against the criteria for the validation of programmes as stipulated in the Institute policy document 2MP01^{II}.

This submission by the School of Business and Humanities evolved through:

- examining the competence, expertise and experience of its staff in addition to the strategy of the department/school/Institute and government educational policy
- feedback from prospective students at open evenings and other marketing events

¹ European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System

^{II} 2MP01 Design, validation and accreditation of new academic programmes

Programme overview

This is a one year part-time programme leading to a special purpose award in psychological studies.

This programme is designed to:

- Introduce the student to fundamental concepts, debates and methodologies in psychology and human development.
- Explore the areas of the self and the individual's relationships with others focussing upon group formation, peer group characteristics and will introduce personality theory.
- Provide an understanding of contemporary issues and debates in the treatment of psychological disorders.

Programme detail

| | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Programme title | Certificate in Psychological Studies |
| Award title | Certificate in Psychological Studies |
| Award type | Special Purpose |
| NFQ¹ level | 7 |
| ECTS credits | 20 |
| Programme code | BN715 |
| Banner code | BN_HDIPS_Q |

¹ National Framework of Qualifications

Panel members

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Chairperson | Dr. Joseph Ryan Athlone Institute of Technology |
| Panel member 1 | Dr. Thomas O'Toole Waterford Institute of Technology |
| Panel member 2 | Dr. Alan Ringland Tralee Institute of Technology |
| Panel member 3 | Mr. Gary Ryan Athletics Association of Ireland |
| Panel member 4 | Dr. John Gaffney Sligo Institute of Technology |
| In attendance | Dr. Diarmuid O'Callaghan Institute of Technology Blanchardstown Mr. Michael Keane Institute of Technology Blanchardstown |
| Date of Panel Meeting | Wednesday 9 th April 2008 |

Institute staff present

Head of School, Head of Department & Programme Leader(s)

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Mr. Michael Tobin | Head of School of Business and Humanities |
| Mr. Pat O'Connor | Head of Department of Business |
| Ms. Mary O'Reilly | Department of Humanities |
| Mr. Aiden Carthy | Department of Humanities |

Panel findings

Section I

In evaluating the appropriateness, quality and proposed operation of this programme the following criteria has been considered and is hereby reported upon:

Strategic planning

The panel was satisfied that the programme is in keeping with the Institute's mission, that it does not constitute redundant provision and that it makes efficient use of resources.

Protection of learners

Section 43 of the Act^I does not apply.

Quality assurance

The panel were informed of how the submission had been developed and approved internally whilst complying with the Institute's quality assurance policies and procedures. The panel concurred that said policies and procedures had been applied to the development of the proposed programme.

Programme titles and award titles

Following discussion, the panel was satisfied that the title of the proposed programme, is clear, accurate and fit for the purpose of informing prospective learners and other stakeholders and consistent with HETAC^{II} award titles. However, the panel agreed that advice should be sought regarding the level of this special purpose award. It was noted that titles of minor, special purpose and supplemental awards are subject to review by HETAC and any subsequent recommendations from HETAC with regard to title will be accommodated.

^I Qualifications (Education and Training) Act, 1999

^{II} Higher Education and Training Awards Council

Ethics

The panel was satisfied that the Institute has internal policies and procedures in place to ensure that all teaching, learning or research activity across the spectrum of NFQ levels is conducted / delivered in a manner that is both morally and professionally ethical.

Section II

In evaluating this programme the following specific aspects have been considered and are hereby reported upon:

Unity

The panel found that the programme design is consistent with HETAC's policy on Accumulation of Credits and Certification of Subjects, that it has an underlying unifying theme with modules bonded by linkages being either implicit or explicit. It was also clear to the panel how the standards of knowledge, skill and competence evolve throughout the programme as a whole.

Teaching and learning

The panel discussed with staff of the Institute the various modes of interaction practised with learners. Evidence of a clear dialogue was confirmed, enabling learners to develop and have available to them the support of academic staff.

Course management arrangements were discussed and deemed adequate.

The panel was satisfied that the necessary staffing levels will be in place and were suitably impressed with the qualifications, experience, competence and commended the obvious enthusiasm of the staff concerned.

Rationale

The development of this programme is in unison with the core values and mission of ITB, to embrace a policy of inclusion and participation in third level education. When the institute applied for delegated authority, the Social Care team engaged with a range of stakeholders including prospective undergraduate and postgraduate students, to elicit feedback concerning current programmes on offer at ITB and to garner opinions concerning their wishes for future

development. A significant number of prospective students indicated a desire for the development of a programme specific to the discipline of psychology.

Frequently at open evenings and other marketing events, requests have also been made by students who feel unready to engage with full-time study for a variety of reasons, for introductory level programmes which would allow them to sample a third-level learning environment. .

This programme is designed to meet both needs simultaneously and will equip students with the skills and techniques which they require to succeed at third level and also offer a range of modules which will introduce them to psychological theory and debate. It was noted that the academic content of these modules have been based on previously-validated modules which were amended to accommodate a more-general audience.

Minimum entry requirements

The minimum entry requirements for standard applicants are a pass in five subjects (ordinary level) in the Leaving Certificate to include mathematics and English or Irish, or an equivalent qualification. Mature students may be admitted without meeting these minimum entry requirements.

Learner assessment

Through discussion with the design team, and from the submission document itself it was explained to the panel the multiple modules of assessment, both formal and informal that will be employed. The scale of learner assessment was also deemed appropriate for the proposed programme.

Standards of knowledge, skill and competence

The panel felt having reviewed the syllabi and assessment methods that learners would be capable of attaining the standards of knowledge, skill or competence as presented. However, clarity was requested from HETAC relating to level of terminal special-purpose awards where individual modules are at different academic levels.

Decision of the panel

The panel recommended the validation of the proposed programme namely:

| | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Programme title | Certificate in Psychological Studies |
| Award title | Certificate in Psychological Studies |
| Award type | Special Purpose |
| NFQ^I level | 7* |
| ECTS credits | 20 |
| Programme code | BN715 |
| Banner code | BN_HDIPS_Q |

* *see recommendation below*

Panel recommendations

- 1) Seek advice from HETAC to determine the appropriate level of this award, given the blend of levels associated with individual modules.

Subsequent to the panel visit and prior to completion of this report, HETAC were consulted relating to the award level of a special-purpose award with different levels associated with different modules. In this case 50% of the credits are considered on their own to be at level 6, and 50% at level 7. It was noted that National policy^{II} suggests a major award can have less than 100% of the modules at the level of the terminal award. It was concluded that the level of the award would be determined by the overall learning outcomes. Given that an award map to the overall level 7 award standards was presented to the validation panel and that the purpose of the programme is as a specialist skill set, the current programme is likely, on that basis, to be appropriate for linking to level 7 of the National Framework of Qualifications, based on the standards of knowledge, skill and competence obtained on completion of the entire programme.

I National Framework of Qualifications

II See Principles and operational guidelines for the implementation of a national approach to credit in Irish higher education and training
www.nqai.ie/docs/publications/23.doc

Panel observations

The panel were suitably impressed with the structure, content and originality of the programme and commended the willingness of Institute staff present to engage in open and frank dialog through which their obvious enthusiasm for the new programme became evident.

Panel signatures

Chairperson

Dr. Joseph Ryan _____ Date _____

Secretary

Dr. Diarmuid O'Callaghan _____ Date _____