



Institute of Technology Sligo
INSTITIÚID TEICNEOLAÍOCHTA SLIGEACH

PROGRAMME VALIDATION REPORT

Date of Evaluation: April 9th 2019

Programme Evaluated:
Master of Arts in Professional Leadership

Unique Programme *SG-HPREF-M09*
Reference Number PRN:

Panel of Assessors:

Mr Tom Cullivan
(Chairperson)

Retired HETAC Secretary

Dr Dan Davies

Director of Higher Education Management programmes,
School of Management, University of Bath. England

Prof Robert Galavan

Chair in Strategic Management, School of Business,
NUI, Maynooth.

Ms Edel Murphy

Head of Talent Acquisition, Abtran.

Dr Michele Glacken

Assistant Registrar
Institute of Technology Sligo

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 Institute, Faculty, Department and Programme Management

Attendees

- Dr Brendan Mc Cormack, President
- Mr Colin Mc Clean Registrar, VP of Academic Affairs
- Dr Michael Barrett (Head of Faculty of Business & Social Science)
- Dr Breda Mc Taggart (Head of Department of Social Sciences)
- Dr Tomas O Flaherty

The President provided an overview of the Institute in terms of its strategic plan, facilities, student numbers, proposed infrastructural developments and TU ambitions. The key academic and research related strengths of the Institute were detailed for the panel. Exemplars of the many and varied links the Institute has with various employers in the region were provided and an explanation as to how the proposed programme would fill the identified professional leadership gap in the region. The programme development team and Head of Faculty consultancy with all types of organisations (public, private and third sector) and the evidenced based literature shaped the programme content.

Members of the panel articulated the tension they perceived between what the programme appears to be on the face of it (TGT) and what it is trying to articulate to be (TGR). The team acknowledged this tension but provided assurances to the panel that whilst the strive to achieve the TU metrics was a driver to make the research component of taught Master's programme larger in terms of ECTS allocation and associated outcomes that it was not the sole driver. The team had already perceived a need for the research component of taught programmes to be expanded as many past students have been curtailed in their research activity by the limited number of ECTS allocation. The panel discussed with the team their perception that the taught component was extensive for its 35 ECTS allocation. The team explained the rationale for same and that they had benchmarked the programme against international comparatives. They believed the selected modules (& content therein) were the key attributes of professional leadership and that the students required this knowledge to achieve the learning outcomes of the programme and undertake a meaningful research project. The team were challenged on whether they perceived the 5 ECTS research module *Research design & development* was going to have the capacity to prepare students to undertake a substantial research project and prepare students to make the transition from the smaller taught component of the programme to a significant research component. The team explained that students would develop key research skills such as literature searching, formulating literature reviews as part of some of the other taught modules so that all the research learning will not occur solely in the *Research design & development* module. In addition, the students will continue to have a series of taught workshops/ sessions as part of the *research thesis* module and 1.5hrs of supervision per week which will developed their research capacity in a supportive manner.

The panel queried how the team planned to support students of different academic backgrounds and were assured that the application process would identify student's academic capacity and that the correct support/advise would be provided to students at that time regarding their application. All students would be able to avail of the various Institute supports such as the writing centre.

The panel shared with the team their perception that the transdisciplinary focus of the programme alluded to in the programme introduction was not evident in the module descriptors/content. The team articulated that it was their intention to reflect the transdisciplinary aspiration in programme delivery and that they would revisit the modules to ensure that it is articulated more clearly.

The team assured the panel that they had considered and had experience of providing online students who are unable to attend proposed workshops with opportunities for networking and programme participation through mediums such as live streamlined workshops.

Meeting with Programme team

Attendees:

- Dr Breda Mc Taggart (Head of Department of Social Sciences)
- Dr Tomas O Flaherty
- Dr Chris Mc Loughlin
- Dr Paul Tansey
- Dr Leonard Taylor
- Ms Valerie Mc Taggart
- Mr John Gaynor

The programme team articulated their selection of modules and their belief that they were relevant to private, public and third level organisations. The team were challenged on the perception that the module content appeared to be targeted at private industry to the detriment of public and third level organisations. Each module leader subsequently shared with the panel how their module will contribute to the programme outcomes and develop professional leaders who can contribute to all types of organisations. The team were asked to share with the panel where the concepts of change management and organisational culture were dealt with in the programme. The panel were satisfied with the team's response and their commitment to dealing with these concepts in all modules.

The dichotomy between giving participants leadership related knowledge and the capacity to act as professional leaders as a consequence of programme participation was teased out with the team and in particular the strategies the team perceive they could implement to address this perceived/potential gap. The programme team consider the research dissertation and the conduction of leadership related research will address this gap as the students will have to consider the knowledge they have acquired through a variety of lens and apply it in their research study. The panel teased out with the team their ideas around the methodologies that the students could potentially utilise and the team's capacity to support a variety of methodologies. The potential of Action Enquiry as a research methodology was explored with the team.

The panel discussed with the team the programme documentation content which provides significant detail in relation to stage 1 of the programme which equates to slightly over 1/3 of the programme (35 ETCS) in comparison to the minimal detail provided for the remaining 2/3 of the programme (55ECTS). The team recognised this dearth and shared with the panel the multiple supports/ resources that will underpin the research thesis component of the programme which will support the student during this potentially transformative phase.

The proposed assessment methodologies were discussed, with the panel congratulating the team on the wide variety of assessment strategies proposed but sharing their concerns about the number of assessments and the use of examinations as a strategy at Master Level. The team defended their proposed assessment load (incremental scaffolding approach, which promoted engagement and facilitated feedback) but articulated they were open to reconsidering it to enhance the programme.

This concluded the session with the programme team. All persons were thanked for their active engagement in the process.

Decision of the Validation Panel

Master of Arts in Professional Leadership

The programme validation panel recommend the programme for approval to Academic Council.

Commendations

1. The programme validation panel commend the team for the programme concept and its applicability to the regional and national employment scene.
2. The programme validation panel commend the programme team for the cross faculty team working and rigorous manner in which the programme was developed.
3. The programme validation panel commend the programme team for the quality of the programme paperwork produced for the validation panel.

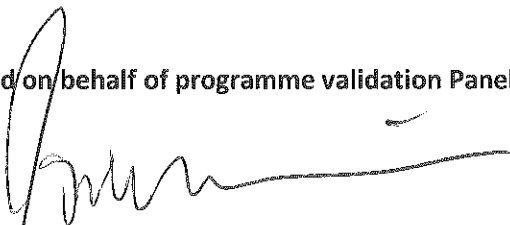
Conditions

1. The module titled *Research design & development* should recommend a methodology which would enhance the students' research and professional leadership capacity and draws on all the strands of leadership from the other stage 1 taught modules.
2. The support (supervision, workshops etc.) provided to students in the development of their dissertation should ensure that the transdisciplinary nature of leadership is considered through viewing problems through a variety of lens, that the connection of disciplinary knowledge to the practice of leadership is made, and that the values and ethos of the programme are reflected.


Recommendations

1. It is recommended that the programme team review module descriptors to ensure real world leadership challenges are explicit and that the content is applicable to leadership in public, private and third sector organisations.
2. It is recommended that the programme team review the assessment load and consider making a proportion of the summative assessments formative.
3. It is recommended that the programme team revisit the use of exams as an assessment strategy in light of the teams desire to have an "*authentic assessment strategy that relates to real world tasks*" (Vol.1, p.23).
4. It is recommended that the programme team review all reading lists to ensure they reflect a breadth of contemporary literature.

Signed on behalf of programme validation Panel



Mr Tom Cullivan
Chairperson



Michele Glacken
Dr Michele Glacken
Recording Secretary

Date: 9.7.19

Date: ~~25/4/2019~~ 9.7.19

Department response to Validation Panel report

Date of panel:

Date of response:

Responders: Dr Breda McTaggart & Dr Tomas O Flaherty

Programme Title(s): Master of Arts in Humanities in Professional Leadership

Conditions	Response to conditions
<p>1.The module titled Research design & development should recommend a methodology which would enhance the students’ research and professional leadership capacity and draws on all the strands of leadership from the other stage 1 taught modules.</p>	<p>We have clearly included it in both the RSCH09029 2019 Research Design & Development module outline and the RSCH09028 2019 Research Thesis module outline that the recommended research approach is action enquiry. We have included the rationale to allow the merging of leadership and research the development of one will support.</p>
<p>2The support (supervision, workshops etc.) provided to students in the development of their dissertation should ensure that the transdisciplinary nature of leadership is considered through viewing problems through a variety of lens, that the connection of disciplinary knowledge to the practice of leadership is made, and that the values and ethos of the programme are reflected.</p>	<p>We have included in the T&L section of the RSCH09028 2019 Research Thesis the following guidance:</p> <p>Learners will avail of one to one supervision with a designated supervisor and may undertake additional workshops that their supervisor considers of value. This support will ensure that the transdisciplinary nature of leadership is considered through viewing problems through a variety of lens, ensuring that the connection of disciplinary knowledge to the practice of leadership is made and that the values and ethos of the programme are reflected. To undertake this successfully students must fully engage with their research supervision.</p> <p>In addition once supervisors are appointed we will have a supervisors meeting to ensure consistency in our approach.</p>

Recommendations	Response to recommendations
<p>1. It is recommended that the programme team review module descriptors to ensure real world leadership challenges are explicit and that the content is applicable to</p>	<p>All modules were reviewed, considered and added as appropriate real work examples from across all sectors.</p>

sector organisations.	
2. It is recommended that the programme team review the assessment load and consider making a proportion of the summative assessments formative.	Assessment load reviewed and the team reduced it within two modules.
3. It is recommended that the programme team revisit the use of exams as an assessment strategy in light of the teams desire to have an “ <i>authentic assessment strategy that relates to real world tasks</i> ” (Vol.1, p.23).	
4. It is recommended that the programme team review all reading lists to ensure they reflect a breadth of contemporary literature.	Reading lists reviewed and updated with some additional texts added.

All conditions & recommendation responded to date reviewed by the Assistant Registrar. A review of progress will be conducted in 3 months.

Michele Glacken

25.4.2019

Date:

Dr Michele Glacken