



**Institute of Technology Sligo**  
**INSTITIÚID TEICNEOLAÍOCHTA SLIGEACH**

**PROGRAMME VALIDATION REPORT**

**Date of Evaluation: June 7th 2019**

**Programmes Evaluated:**

1. **Master of Arts in ( Specialism) through Creative Practice**
2. **Master of Arts in (Specialism) through research**

**Unique Programme**

**Reference Number PRN:**

**Panel of Assessors:**

Mr Declan Courell  
(Chairperson)

Registrar, St Angela's College Sligo

Dr Franziska Schroeder

Senior Lecturer, School of Arts, English & Languages, Queens  
University Belfast.

Dr Marc O Riain

Lecturer, Department of Architecture, Cork Institute of  
Technology.

Ms Emer Mc Garry

Interim Director, The Model, The Mall, Sligo

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** VP for Academic Affairs & Registrar and Head of Department of YADA

### Attendees:

- Mr Colin Mc Lean, VP for Academic Affairs & Registrar
- Mr Emmet O Doherty, Head of Department

The VP for Academic Affairs & Registrar provided an overview of the Institute in terms of its strategic plan, student numbers, facilities, proposed infrastructural developments, TU ambitions and the required research metrics for the attainment of same. A brief overview of the restructuring that occurred at Institute level in 2018 that led to the establishment of YADA was shared along with the capital funding received to develop YADA's infrastructure.

### **Programme rationale**

The Head of Department shared with the validation panel the context for the development of the proposed programmes - identified need for progression pathway for graduates of YADA, addressing the need for practitioners to develop higher order practice and/or research skills which could be deployed to enhance their practice and their discipline and responding to the growing R & D focus of industry. The relatively deprived social/economic status of many of their current students/ graduates was an additional reason advanced for establishing progression pathways/ post graduate programmes at a regional level.

The panel queried if a formal marketing demand analysis had been conducted. The Head of Department shared with the team the extent of marketing analysis conducted. The panel sought clarification why the programme team had selected to develop Masters Programmes which were open to a number of specialisms rather than a focused programme and were satisfied with the response received. The panel queried with the Head of Department whether one 5 ECTS Creative practice module is sufficient but were satisfied with the explanation that the content was not independent of other modules and that the totality that would be delivered/ received was sufficient to meet the programme learning outcomes. The module facilitated students to trial their substantive dissertation work.

The staffing compliment of YADA was discussed. The Head of Department shared the current staffing statistics and ongoing recruitment which should bring an additional 12.5 staff to the department. The number of staff with doctoral qualifications and/ or undertaking doctoral studies was also discussed in terms of the department's capacity to supervise the proposed dissertations of 45ECTS. The panel teased out the Institute's supports for supervisors and YADAs models of supervision and how supervision would occur in the third semester. The manner in which YADA proposed to provide supervision for the proposed variety of specialisms was also explored with the Head of Department. This exploration revealed that at this juncture the department have not the expertise in all areas but that future recruitment would target their identified deficits such as Music performance management. The panel were impressed by the variety of areas that the Head of Department felt they could offer supervision in from their current staff compliment.

As the proposed programme delivery is blended in nature, the specifics of same were explored in terms of face to face contact, the online infrastructure and the experience of academic staff with this mode of delivery. The expertise of the Institute in the area of online learning in terms of infrastructure, staff support/education, instructional designers etc. was considered a significant support to the new programmes.

### **Meeting with Programme Leads & Head of Department**

#### Attendees:

- Mr Emmet O Doherty, Head of Department
- Dr Rhona Trench
- Dr Una Mannion
- Mr Ronnie Hughes
- Ms Rowan Watson
- Ms Bernadette Donohoe

The Chairperson welcomed the team and complimented them on the proposed programmes. The panel asked the team to detail for them the profile of the student they wished to attract to the programme. The team shared who they considered would apply and the academic requirements that they would have to meet or the capacity to meet the RPL requirements of the Institute. The panel explored with the team their rationale for not making the possession of a portfolio a mandatory entry requirement and were satisfied with the rationale provided. The panel advised the team that they need to consider the competencies a level 7 graduate would have to be able to demonstrate prior to admission to the programme. The panel also explored with the team if a graduate of one specialism could opt to undertake the Masters programme in a different specialism. The team explained how they were going to screen for same and that the interdisciplinary nature of the proposed programmes would afford students with the opportunity to move across specialisms. The team believed this was their unique selling point. The panel advised that if the inter-disciplinary nature of the programme was their unique selling point that it required greater articulation in the programme documentation.

The panel sought clarification if achieving accreditation with the relevant practice bodies was being sought as it was unclear in the documentation and could possibly be unclear for potential students. The team were advised that the expected programme outcomes (including accreditation/ registration etc.) was made very explicit both in the programme documentation and in any marketing material so that potential students were very clear on what they would attain on programme completion.

The extent of the teams' industrial links was teased out as the panel considered there was insufficient detail in the programme documentation. Discussions revealed additional industrial links that existed and the need to expand the current linkages. Potential strategies for same were discussed, as was the importance of the development of further industrial links to the success of the programme. The panel advised the team that their website should

exploit further the expertise of staff and advised potential students of graduate employment opportunities.

The panel discussed with the team their concerns about the programme titles advised and asked them to consider other potential titles. The team informed the validation panel that they had already consider potential alternatives such as Master of Arts in (specialism) through practice-led inquiry/ collaborative practice.

The panel discussed with the team the module titles advanced and asked them to reflect on them to ensure they reflected the content of the module. Issues such as module progression etc. were explored with the team and advice given to make some more explicit in the documentation. The need to provide provisional grades/feedback were discussed in relation to the modules which were serving as a precursor to the dissertation. The panel advised the team regarding the need to ensure that all of the modules had up-to-date references and the need to ensure content such as user experience design were included in the module title Place, Space and Culture. The panel was complimentary of the teams' proposal that modules will be delivered from a number of practice perspectives so that students can gain an appreciation of other specialisms and see their commonalities and distinctiveness.

The panel thanked the teams for the participation. This concluded this session.

### **Decision of the Validation Panel**

The validation panel recommended both programmes for approval to Academic Council with the following conditions and recommendations.

#### **Conditions**

1. The programme team need to reflect on the titles of both programmes to ensure they reflect the focus of the degree and are in alignment with acceptable titles from the Institute's perspective.
2. The programme team need to develop programme learning outcomes and align them to the QQI Arts & Design standards at level 9 and ensure all module learning outcomes are written in a manner which makes them measurable and at the appropriate academic level.
3. The programme team need to ensure that the programme documentation is explicit in relation to prerequisites for module initiation, engagement and progression.
4. Ongoing support for students in the third semester is required for students undertaking their dissertation. The third semester should be in alignment with the academic calendar.
5. The programme documentation needs to be proof-read and edited accordingly.
6. The programme team need to develop a mission statement for each of the proposed programmes which clearly articulates the focus of the programmes and how they are unique ( e.g. Interdisciplinary/ links to industry)
7. The Institute needs to commit a % of available student bursaries for three years to assist in establishing and embedding the programme in the region.

## Recommendations

1. The programme team should make explicit in the programme documentation all of their current industrial links and consider holding an event to strengthen and expand these links early in the academic year 2019-2020. The aforementioned event should also provide students with the opportunity to network with people from industry.
2. The programme team should document their areas of expertise/ specialism which they can provide supervision in. This information should be more explicit in the programme documentation and programme marketing material. It should also inform future recruitment plans.

## Signed on behalf of programme validation panel



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Mr Declan Courell  
Chairperson

21.6.2019



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Dr Michele Glacken  
Assistant Registrar

Revision 001: Revised wording to condition # 4 agreed 18.9.2019