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

Banner code	ITB code	Programme title	Award title	NFQ level / ECTS credits	Format
BN_HSACD_8	BN115	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Social and Community Development	Bachelor of Arts (Honours)	NFQ level 8 240 credits	Ab initio

Embedded awards

Banner code	ITB code	Programme title	Award title	NFQ level / ECTS credits	Format
BN_HSACD_7	BN025	Bachelor of Arts in Social and Community Development	Bachelor of Arts	NFQ level 7 180 credits	Ab initio
BN_HSACD_C	BN036	Higher Certificate in Arts in Social and Community Development	Higher Certificate in Arts	NFQ level 6 120 credits	Ab initio
BN_HSACD_D	BN313	Bachelor of Arts in Social and Community Development	Bachelor of Arts	NFQ level 7 60 credits	Add on to BN036
BN_HSACD_B	BN415	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Social and Community Development	Bachelor of Arts (Honours)	NFQ level 8 60 credits	Add on to BN025

4. Peer-review panel

Ms. Ann Campbell	Registrar Dundalk Institute of Technology
Dr. Marian Fitzgibbon	Head of School of Humanities Athlone Institute of Technology
Dr. Teresa Nyland	Team Leader in Community Development Health Service Executive
Dr. Carmel Gallagher	School of Social Sciences and Law Dublin Institute of Technology

Ms. Ann Campbell kindly agreed to chair this panel.

Also in attendance:

Dr. Diarmuid O'Callaghan	Registrar Institute of Technology Blanchardstown
Mr. Michael Keane	Quality Assurance Officer Institute of Technology Blanchardstown

5.   **Consultation**

5.1. Management consulted during panel meeting:

Mr. Pat O'Connor	Head of School of Business and Humanities
Dr. Celesta McCann James	Head of Department of Humanities

5.2. Academic staff consulted during panel meeting:

Mr. Liam McGlynn	Dr. Ruth Harris	Dr. Bríd ní Chonaill
Ms. Joanie Cousins	Mr. Tom Donohoe	Mr. Gael Le Roux
Ms. Mary O'Reilly	Ms. Lavinia McLean	Mr. Aiden Carthy
Ms. Denise Lyons	Ms. Pamela Kelly	Mr. Kevin Murphy
Mr. Cormac Doran	Ms. Deirdre Bonar	

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 post-graduate 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 _____