Validation Report

itb Institute of Technology
Blanchardstown
Institiúid Teicneolaíochta
Baile Bhlainséir

BN031

Higher Certificate in Science in Computing Associate Professional in Networking Technologies

Introduction

In 2006 the Institute 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.

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[I].

Programme overview

The 'Higher Certificate in Science in Computing Associate Professional in Networking Technologies' was designed as a dual education pathway to provide learners with essential IT knowledge, skills and practical hands on experience acquired through a combination of academic delivery and work placements.

The programme will be delivered over two calendar years, each consisting of a 16 week block of academic delivery followed by an eight month block of work placement.

Content of the academic modules have been aligned to the following industry certifications which learners will be encouraged to acquire as part of the programme:

1. CompTIA A+
2. Linux Professional Institute (LPIC-1)
3. Cisco Certified Entry Networking Technician
4. Microsoft Office Specialist (MOS)
5. Cisco Certified Networking Associate
6. VMware Certified Associate – Cloud (VCA-Cloud)
7. Microsoft Certified Systems Expert Server Infrastructure (MCSE)
8. CompTIA Security+

Due to the innovative design, learner focus and practical content of this programme it will cater not only for school-leavers interested in pursuing a career in the IT sector but also cater for those already working in the sector wishing to obtain or add to their academic qualifications.

[I] 2MP01 Design, validation and accreditation of new academic programmes

Programme detail

Programme title	Higher Certificate in Science in Computing - Associate Professional in Networking Technologies
Award title	Higher Certificate in Science
Award type	Major
NFQ[I] level	6
ECTS[II] credits	120
Programme code	BN031

Panel composition

Chair	Dr. Dermot Douglas Higher Education Consultant
Academic expert	Ms. Janice O'Connell Head of Department of Information Technology Limerick Institute of Technology
Industry experts	Dr. Tony O'Donnell SAP BusinessObjects Division Mr. Brian Honan BH Consulting
In attendance	Mr. Richard Gallery Registrar, IT Blanchardstown Mr. Michael Keane Quality Assurance Officer, IT Blanchardstown
Date of Panel Meeting	Monday 16th June 2014

[I] National Framework of Qualifications
[II] European Credit Transfer (and Accumulation) System

Consultation

Management consulted during the panel meeting:

Dr. Brian Nolan	Head of School of Informatics and Engineering
Dr. Anthony Keane	Head of Department of Informatics

Academic staff consulted during the panel meeting:

Mr. Tom Nolan	Ms. Aoife Fox	Dr. Markus Hofmann
Mr. Daniel McSweeney	Mr. Gerome Donnelly	Mr. Michael Hegarty
Ms. Marie Brennan		

Findings of the panel

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.

Evidence of consultation

Through discussion with Institute staff, the panel found that a comprehensive research/consultation effort was undertaken with stakeholders to validate the need for, and the preferred structure and characteristics of the proposed programme.

Learner employment potential

The panel congratulated the programme design team on this initiative to integrate valuable work placements and industry based certifications providing graduates with the necessary knowledge and skills to be of immediate value to industry. The panel confirmed that learner acquisition of industry based certifications during the programme is not mandatory. However, where a student excels in a particular area the Institute will encourage, facilitate, and support the undertaking of the professional certification.

Protection of learners

Section 43 of the Act[I] does not apply.

Quality assurance

The panel was 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 title and award title

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 QQI award titles.

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.

Unity

The panel found that the programme design is consistent with QQI 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.

[I] Qualifications (Education and Training) Act, 1999

Teaching and learning

The panel discussed with staff of the Institute the various modes of interaction practised with learners. Course management arrangements were discussed and deemed adequate. Evidence of a clear dialogue was confirmed, enabling learners to develop and have available to them the support of academic staff. The role of the placement supervisor was discussed with the panel recommending that further definition be provided to ensure that learner/employer expectations were realistic. See panel recommendations.

Learner assessment

Through discussion with the design team, it was explained in detail to the panel the multiple modes of assessment, both formal and informal that will be employed throughout this programme. The panel was informed of how the Institute's policy on continuous assessment is based on the objective of developing/enhancing the learners' application of knowledge, aptitude for critical analysis and problem solving within specific timeframes. The scale of learner assessment was deemed by the panel to be appropriate for the proposed programme.

Standards of knowledge, skill and competence

Having reviewed the syllabi and assessment methods as proposed the panel was of the opinion that learners would be capable of attaining the standards of knowledge, skill or competence relevant for this award.

Access, transfer and progression

The panel confirmed that the programme incorporates the established procedures for access, transfer and progression.

Decision of the panel

The panel recommended the validation of the proposed programme namely:

Programme title   Higher Certificate in Science in Computing
                             Associate Professional in Networking
                             Technologies

Award title   Higher Certificate in Science

Award type   Major

NFQ level   6

ECTS credits   120

Programme code   BN031

Banner code   BN_KHCAP_C

Panel observations

The panel commended the quality and detail of the proposal and congratulated the design team on this initiative to address and respond to this sector's needs whilst producing a viable, innovative and industry focussed programme. They concurred on the wide range of skills a graduate seeking employment would require and felt that these were well reflected in the programme.

Panel recommendations

In the light of continuous improvement the panel offered the following recommendations to further enhance what they found to be a robust, practical, industry based programme providing relevant add on value to the learner through the possible acquisition of industry based certifications:

➢ Industry certifications

   Structure and present the industry certifications relevant to this programme into thematic subsets in order to provide realistic expectations for both learners and employers. Also, clarify the extent to which the Institute will support the learner towards costs relating to same.

➢ Work placement

   The panel stressed the importance of clearly defining learner/employer expectations in relation to placement in addition to the supervision of same. The panel recommended providing further clarity on the level of placement supervision and training of placement supervisors.

➢ Assessment

   Clearly articulate repeat assessment opportunities and contingency plans in the event of loss of work placement. Also reconsider the credit allocation and weighting of the assessment events relating to the second work placement.

➢ Make other technical and minor amendments as discussed at the panel meeting.

I have read the amended programme submission document for the **Higher Certificate in Science in Computing - Associate Professional in Networking Technologies, 120 ECTS** **(BN031)** submitted by the School of Informatics and Engineering – Institute of Technology, Blanchardstown, and have received feedback from the other members of the External Peer Review Panel, who have also received and reviewed the amended documentation, and I can state that it addresses, in a satisfactory manner, all the conditions set by the panel.

Therefore, we recommend this programme for validation to the Academic Council.

Signed on behalf of the Peer Review Panel
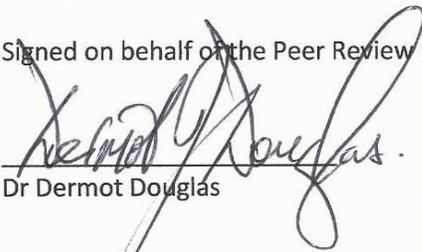
Dr Dermot Douglas

Date: 07/08/2014

Secretary

Mr. Richard Gallery   _____   Date _____