

Validation Report



Higher Certificate in Arts in Information Provision and Advocacy Practice (BN043)

Department of Humanities

Institute of Technology Blanchardstown

May 2016

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 2MP01¹.

Programme overview

The Citizen's Information Board (CIB) is the statutory body which supports the provision of information, advice and advocacy services on a broad range of public and social services. It supports the Information Service (CIS) network, Money Advice & Budgeting Services (MABs) and the National Advocacy Service for people with disabilities (NAS).

This programme has been designed as a result of the Institute successfully tendering for the design, development and delivery of a Higher Certificate in Arts in Information Provision and Practice at NFQ level 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications for the CIB. This builds on the ongoing relationship between ITB and CIB initiated in 2011 when a Special Purpose Award in Management Skills for Managers of Advocacy Services was developed in partnership with CIB for the managers of Citizen's Information Services network.

This programme responds to needs identified by senior management and the Board of the Citizens Information Board for training specific to the area of information provision and the provision of advice and advocacy for CIS Information Officers and Volunteer Information Officers in the Citizen's Information Services.

The role of the Information Officer is evolving driven by changes within the environment in which Citizens Information Services operate. The senior management and Board of CIB has recognised the need for accredited training for Information Officers, in order to facilitate the development of key competencies to meet the growing needs for information, advice and advocacy services in society. These changes have been driven by a rapidly changing society and through legislative changes such as the Comhairle Act 2000 and the Citizens Information Act 2007. An Information Provision programme that will equip information providers with the key skills, knowledge and competencies is

¹ 2MP01 Design, validation and accreditation of new academic programmes

necessary to meet these growing needs and to maximise the potential of these services to citizens.

This Higher Certificate in Arts will be delivered over two academic years and will consist of modularised content to be delivered in 2 semesters per academic year. Semesters one and two focus on preparing learners for the role of Information Provider in a CIB organisational context with semesters three and four addressing advocacy roles and preparing the learner to be competent in specific areas such as social welfare representation.

Modules will be delivered using a variety of methods including lectures, workshops, and tutorials and the use of virtual learning environments (VLEs). As the prospective cohort of students is spread across a wide geographical area, workshops and tutorials will be based in multiple locations across the country and the use of VLEs will be extensive contributing to access for and engagement of learners in a supportive blended learning environment.

Reflecting different roles in Citizen's Information Services and the differing demands of those roles, the proposed programme includes an embedded minor award leading to a Certificate in Information Provision and Advice (NFQ level 6, 60 ECTS credits).

Panel composition

Chair	Dr. Jim Murray Institutes of Technology Ireland (IoTI)
Academic experts	Ms. Allison Kenneally Carlow Institute of Technology Dr. Kevin Wallace Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art Design and Technology
Industry experts	Ms. Siobhan Lawlor Department of Social Protection Ms. Maria Farry Pobal
In attendance	Mr. Richard Gallery Registrar IT Blanchardstown Mr. Michael Keane Quality Assurance Officer IT Blanchardstown
Date of Panel Meeting	Friday 27 th May 2016

Consultation

Management consulted during the panel meeting:

Dr. Pat O'Connor	Head of School of Business & Humanities
Mr. Cormac Doran	Head of Department of Humanities
Ms. Assumpta Harvey	LINC Manager

Academic staff consulted during the panel meeting:

Ms. Joanie Cousins	Ms. Aoife Prendergast
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Non-academic staff consulted during the panel meeting:

Ms. Fiona Coyne	Training Manager, Citizens Information Board (CIB)
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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. The panel commended the programme design team on this innovative response to the needs of the CIB whilst noting the possible long term potential of this programme to a broader audience, see panel recommendations.

Evidence of consultation

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

Learner employment potential

The panel was of the opinion that graduates would be of immediate value to the CIB.

Protection of learners

Section 43 of the Act¹ 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 programmes.

¹ Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012

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 each of the individual programmes as a whole.

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 panel however requested that a more detailed teaching, learning and assessment strategy be articulated, see conditions of validation.

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 the programmes. 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 panel was informed of how the programme delivery team will employ problem/project based learning, project and team-based assignments, and 100% continuous assessment regimes for skills based competencies with an applied focus. However, the panel requested that module assessment strategies and all assessment events be

clearly articulated and linked to module learning outcomes, see conditions of validation.

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 the proposed award. However, the panel requested a schedule of delivery be provided in order to more clearly articulate student contact, engagement and learner workload, see conditions of validation.

Access, transfer and progression

The panel confirmed that the programme incorporates the established procedures for access, transfer and progression. However, the panel requested that the entry requirements be clearly articulated and that the relationship between the major and minor awards be clearly mapped to each of the relevant roles within the CIB, see conditions of validation.

Decision of the panel

The panel recommended the validation of the proposed programme and associated exit award namely:

Programme title	Higher Certificate in Arts in Information Provision & Advocacy Practice
Programme code	BN043
Award title	Higher Certificate in Arts
NFQ level	6 (120 ECTS credits)
Minor award	Certificate in Information Provision & Advice (BN777 – NFQ level 6 - 60 ECTS credits)

Conditions of validation

This validation is subject to the following conditions:

1. Entry requirements

Clearly articulate the entry requirements.

2. Schedule of delivery

Articulate the schedule of delivery providing further clarity on learner contact, engagement and learner workload.

3. Awards to CIB roles

Clarify the relationship of the minor and major award to each of the roles they are designed for within the CIB.

4. Teaching, learning & assessment strategy

Clearly articulate the teaching and learning strategy for this programme.

Define the programme and module assessment strategies clearly articulating all module assessment events.

5. Programme learning outcomes

Include an additional programme learning outcome highlighting the graduate capability of working with a wider empathetic approach in a non-judgmental, non-discriminatory nature.

6. Module learning outcomes

Revise the terminology, focus as per module descriptor and linkage to assessment events as discussed at the panel meeting.

Panel recommendations

In the light of continuous improvement, the panel offered the following recommendations:

➤ Stakeholders

Expand the stakeholder focus to incorporate statutory bodies and agencies outside of the CIB involved in related information provision and advocacy.

Consider future progression opportunity at NFQ level 7 for graduates of this CIB focussed programme.

Consider further programme development and the incorporation of elective choice to explore the future potential of this type of programme to a wider cohort of learners.

➤ Module titles

Reconsider module titles as follows:

CIPP H1013 consider 'Social Welfare & Entitlement Maximisation'

CIPP H1014 consider 'Introduction to Employment Law & Consumer Law'

CIPP H1015 consider 'Addressing Cultural Differences'

CIPP H1016 consider 'Work Based Skills'

CIPP H2013 consider 'Advocacy'

CIPP H2017 consider 'Information Systems'

➤ **Module resources**

Further populate essential and recommended reading materials and clearly articulate specifics in relation to website references.

➤ **Needs analysis**

Include a needs analysis section within the programme documentation.

➤ **Disclosure**

Develop and employ a disclosure policy for staff delivering the programme.

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

Panel signatures

Chair

Dr. Jim Murray _____ Date _____

Secretary

Mr. Richard Gallery _____ Date _____