

Validation Report



**Higher Certificate in Science
in Horticulture (BN045)**

**Bachelor of Science in Horticulture
(BN310)**

**Department of Engineering
School of Informatics & Engineering**

Institute of Technology Blanchardstown

May 2017

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

Within the current suite of horticulture programmes delivered in full-time mode, the Institute offers a 4 year ab-initio NFQ level 8 Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Horticulture (BN113) and a 3 year ab-initio NFQ level 7 Bachelor of Science in Horticulture (BN022).

The development of the Higher Certificate in Science in Horticulture (BN045) programme emanates from a recommendation from the last programmatic review held in 2015 to develop a NFQ level 6 award to accommodate learners wishing to exit having successfully completed years one and two of BN113 and BN022.

The development of the two year part-time Bachelor of Science in Horticulture (BN310) programme is to provide a progression pathway from NFQ level 6 to 7 thus completing the ladder progression opportunities available for part-time students from NFQ level 6 through to 8.

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

Panel composition

Chair	Dr. Brendan O Donnell Vice President of Academic Affairs & Registrar Institute of Technology Tralee
Academic experts	Dr. Caroline Elliott-Kingston University College Dublin Prof. Martin McGann The Pennsylvania State University USA Ms. Claire Woods College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (Northern Ireland)
Industry experts	Dr. John McCullen Former Superintendent of the Phoenix Park, Dublin
In attendance	Dr. Larry McNutt Registrar IT Blanchardstown Mr. Michael Keane Quality Assurance Officer IT Blanchardstown
Date of Panel Meeting	Tuesday 23 rd May 2017

Institute personnel in attendance:

Dr. Anthony Keane	Head of School of Informatics & Engineering
Mr. Richard Gallery	Head of Department of Engineering
Dr. Philip Owende	TU4D Academic Quality Manager

Michael Hagan	Ciarnad Ryan
Joe Smith	Fergus Maughan
Lorraine Foley	Rachel Freeman
Harold Lawlor	Paul Dervan
Dr. Christy Boylan	

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

Within the submission document and 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, delivery modes and characteristics of the proposed programme.

Learner employment potential

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

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 programme.

¹ Qualifications (Education and Training) Act, 1999

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 programmes as a whole.

Teaching and learning

The panel discussed with staff of the Institute the various modes of interaction practised with learners.

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 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.

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 award.

Access, transfer and progression

The panel confirmed that the programmes incorporate the established procedures for access, transfer and progression.

Decision of the panel

The panel recommended the validation of the proposed programmes, details as follows:

Programme title	Higher Certificate in Science in Horticulture
Programme code	BN045
Award title	Higher Certificate in Science
NFQ level	6 (ab-initio 120 ECTS credits)

Programme title	Bachelor of Science in Horticulture
Programme code	BN310
Award title	Bachelor of Science
NFQ level	7 (add on, 60 ECTS credits)

Panel recommendations

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

➤ Module descriptors

Revise the module descriptors as published within Akari Document and at <http://courses.itb.ie> to:

- Align the terminology of the learning outcomes to more accurately reflect that associated with the relevant NFQ levels i.e. 6 and 7.
- Link assessment events to each of the relevant module learning outcomes.
- Clarify the distribution/emphasis of each of the elements within the indicative content.
- Make the practical knowledge and skills acquired in each of the modules more explicit.

➤ Learner workload

Parse module hours on the approved course schedule to detail contact and independent/self-directed learning.

Provide further clarity in relation to contact hours, detailing number of weekly lectures, labs, tutorials etc. in the student handbook.

➤ Work placement

Clarify procedures in relation to students who are unable to acquire/complete work placement.

➤ Floristry & Interior Landscape module (H3026)

Remove floristry, increase the interior landscape content and re-title.

➤ Horticulture in the Community Module (H1028)

Consider rescheduling this module to semester 4 thereby giving learners the opportunity to engage having acquired more knowledge and skills.

➤ **Assessment**

Include a matrix of the assessment schedule per semester within the student handbook.

➤ **eBooks**

Consider investing in ebooks as an additional resource for part-time learners.

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

Panel signatures

Chair

Dr. Brendan O Donnell _____ Date _____

Secretary

Dr. Larry McNutt _____ Date _____