

Validation Report



BN110

**Bachelor of Business (Honours) in
International Business**

with the following embedded programmes

BN017

Bachelor of Business in International Business (ab initio)

BN018

Higher Certificate in Business in International Business (ab initio)

BN304

Bachelor of Business in International Business (add on)

BN411

Bachelor of Business (Honours) in International Business (add on)

Introduction

The Institute of Technology Blanchardstown was established in 1999. The mission of the Institute is to serve its students and the community by meeting the skills needs in the economy and increasing the level of participation in third-level education and training, particularly in Dublin North-West and its environs.

The Institute in 2006 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.

This submission by the School of Business and Humanities evolved through:

- examining the competence, expertise and experience of its staff in addition to the strategy of the department/school/Institute and government educational policy
- identifying through research the skill needs required by Irish indigenous companies operating in the international business environment

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

Programme overview

The Bachelor of Business (Honours) in International Business is a 4 year programme. In the design and development of this programme, close attention was paid to both industry opinion and the existing suite of modules currently being delivered within the department. As a result of this approach, it was decided that first year students would take the standard suite of business and language modules available to all students currently undertaking a programme of study within the Department of Business. This allows additional scope for any student to move to another programme of study with minimum barriers in their way.

As the student moves into the second and subsequent years of study, the modules available to students assume a more European orientation. The language element moves from 5 to 10 credits and European Studies and International Economic and Public Policy modules are introduced. Mainstream business modules are delivered throughout the final three years of the programme.

In the third year of study, students will have the option of studying abroad under the ERASMUS scheme. The Institute currently has arrangements with educational institutes in France, Germany, Spain, Switzerland, Belgium and Austria at which these students can attend. The linkages with these institutes have been in existence since 2000. Should a student not wish to go abroad then they will continue with their foreign language studies. These modules will be complemented with a module in Intercultural Studies and International Selling and Sales Management.

It is also envisaged in the future that a work placement programme may be incorporated into the course after year 2. This may take place either in Ireland or abroad. This will facilitate the acquisition and development of specific business skills for students of the programme.

The final year allows students to continue with their language studies. During this year the students will also complete a dissertation which will have an international orientation.

This programme seeks to embody in students an in-depth understanding of the theories, concepts and methods as applied in the areas of international commerce.

Programme detail

Programme title	Bachelor of Business (Honours) in International Business
Award title	Bachelor of Business (Honours)
NFQ^I level	8
ECTS^{II} credits	240
Programme code	BN110
Banner code	BN_BINTL_8

Embedded awards

Banner code	ITB code	Programme title	Award title	ECTS credits	Format
BN_BINTL_7	BN017	Bachelor of Business in International Business	Bachelor of Business	Level 7 180 credits	Ab initio
BN_BINTL_C	BN018	Higher Certificate in Business in International Business	Higher Certificate in Business	Level 6 120 credits	Ab initio
BN_BINTL_D	BN304	Bachelor of Business in International Business	Bachelor of Business	Level 7 60 credits	Add on
BN_BINTL_B	BN411	Bachelor of Business (Honours) in International Business	Bachelor of Business (Honours)	Level 8 60 credits	Add on

^I National Framework of Qualifications

^{II} European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System

Panel members

Chairperson	Dr. Oliver Murphy IT Tralee
Panel member 1	Mr. Cathal Kearney Dundalk IT
Panel member 2	Mr. Larry Elwood Galway-Mayo IT
Panel member 3	Ms. Nicola Horgan IBEC
Panel member 4	Mr. Vincent O'Connor Athlone IT
In attendance	Dr. Diarmuid O'Callaghan IT Blanchardstown Mr. Michael Keane IT Blanchardstown
Date of Panel Meeting	Friday 29 th February 2008

Institute staff present

Session I Meeting with Director, Head of School & Head of Department

Dr. Mary Meaney Director

Mr. Michael Tobin Head of School of Business and Humanities

Mr. Pat O'Connor Head of Department of Business

Session II Head of School, Head of Department & Programme Leader

Mr. Michael Tobin Head of School of Business and Humanities

Mr. Pat O'Connor Head of Department of Business

Dr. Karen Feery Department of Humanities

Session III Meeting with Lecturing Staff

Mr. Pat O'Connor

Mr. Francis Mc Geough

Dr. Ruth Harris

Mr. Liam Bolger

Dr. Bríd Ní Chonail

Mr. Brian Watters

Ms. Nathalie Cazaux

Mr. Val Andrews

Dr. Karen Feery

Mr. Gary Bernie

Dr. Mary Ann Kenny

Dr. Natasha Evers

Mr. Terence Sheridan

Ms. Tara Rooney

Panel findings

Section I

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 was satisfied that neither additional staffing nor additional facilities will be required in order to deliver this programme.

Evidence of consultation

Through discussion with Institute staff, the panel found that a comprehensive research effort was undertaken to validate the need for the programme, and the preferred structure and characteristics of the proposed programme. An extensive secondary research activity explored Irish Government and European Union publications, trade journals, print media articles, web resources and the output of a recent internal programmatic review.

The primary research activity was pluralistic in nature involving:

- Qualitative feedback arising from individual interviews with existing students, graduates and industry contacts of academic staff and a focus group with industry.
- Quantitative information obtained through an industry survey.

Learner employment potential

It is envisaged that graduates would operate in positions that require ‘*The ability to negotiate, transact business and develop customer relationships in languages other than English is also a basic requirement ... (Enterprise Strategy Group Report 2004)* and where ‘.....*The ability of Irish-based enterprise to communicate effectively with other nationalities and cultures will have a huge bearing on how successful we are....* “ Expert Skills Group report 2007.

A typical selection of commercial positions envisaged for these graduates are International sales and marketing, managerial positions for multinational corporations, trade organisations and indigenous small and medium enterprises with European exposure.

Protection of learners

Section 43 of the Act¹ does not apply.

Quality assurance

The panel were 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 titles and award titles

Following discussion, the panel was satisfied that the title of the proposed programme, and its embedded sub-awards is clear, accurate and fit for the purpose of informing prospective learners and other stakeholders and consistent with HETAC award titles. However, the panel agreed that the word “studies” is removed (see conditions).

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.

¹ Qualifications (Education and Training) Act, 1999

Section II

In evaluating this programme the following specific aspects have been considered and are hereby reported upon:

Unity

The panel found that the programme design is consistent with HETAC's 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. However, the award standards of the embedded Higher Certificate and Ordinary Degree programmes were not mapped against the programme learning outcomes.

Teaching and learning

The panel discussed with staff of the Institute the various modes of interaction practised with learners. Evidence of a clear dialogue was confirmed, enabling learners to develop and have available to them the support of academic staff.

Course management arrangements were discussed and deemed adequate, these included:

- survey of students by lecturer
- summary of survey of students by lecturer
- survey of students by department
- course boards

The panel was satisfied that the necessary staffing levels will be in place and were suitably impressed with the qualifications, experience, competence and commended the obvious enthusiasm of the staff concerned.

Limited information was provided to the panel on the management of students participating in studies abroad. Information relating to distribution of credits, assessment protocols and amount of studies abroad to be taken in the host language could be articulated.

Relevance

Forfás¹ have identified three aspects of education and skills development that are critical to the future of the enterprise sector, these are:

1. An adaptive and responsive higher education sector is necessary to create and exploit knowledge and to produce the number and quality of graduates necessary to support the knowledge economy. Investment in higher education and research is essential to generate the intellectual capital required to fuel an innovation-driven economy. The numbers entering higher education should be maximised.
2. Upskilling of the existing workforce and raising education levels is essential in an environment of constant change. To foster the continual acquisition of knowledge, skills and competencies, formalised approaches to lifelong learning must be introduced and corresponding delivery structures put in place. As a particular priority, policy intervention will be required to ensure the low-skilled are not left behind in the move towards a knowledge society.
3. Efforts will have to be made to expand the workforce to meet growth forecasts and an appropriate skills-based immigration strategy will be required to deal with demand for skilled workers that cannot be satisfied from within Ireland or the EU.

The panel heard that the Institute views the development of a Bachelor of Business (Honours) in International Business as a direct support of the strategy as espoused by Forfás.

¹ Transforming Irish Industry 2008 – 2010 & Economic Profile August 2006, Enterprise Ireland
Forfás Annual Report 2006
Ahead of the Curve, Irelands place in the global economy 2004, Forfás

Minimum entry requirements

Entry requirements for admission to the honours degree were deemed appropriate. It was noted, however, that entry requirements for the level 6 and level 7 embedded programmes were not articulated specifically.

Learner assessment

Through discussion with the design team, and from the submission document itself it was explained in detail to the panel the multiple modules of assessment, both formal and informal that will be employed. These included project work, assignment, self and peer assessment, project assessment and dissertation. The scale of learner assessment was also deemed appropriate for the proposed programme.

Standards of knowledge, skill and competence

The panel felt having reviewed the syllabi and assessment methods that learners would be capable of attaining the standards of knowledge, skill or competence relevant for this award.

Access, transfer and progression

The programme incorporates the established procedures for access, transfer and progression while accommodating a variety of access and entry requirements from applicants with expertise related disciplines.

Decision of the panel

The panel recommended the validation of the proposed programme including its embedded awards namely:

BN_BINTL_8	BN110	Bachelor of Business (Honours) in International Business	Ab initio
BN_BINTL_7	BN017	Bachelor of Business in International Business	Ab initio
BN_BINTL_C	BN018	Higher Certificate in Business in International Business	Ab initio
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BN_BINTL_B	BN411	Bachelor of Business (Honours) in International Business	Add on

Conditions

This validation is subject to the following conditions:

1. The word “studies” is to be removed from the programme title.
2. Within the submission document the following need to be specified:
 - a) Mapping of award standards for the Higher Certificate and Bachelor of Business to the National Framework of Qualifications.
 - b) Entry requirements for the Higher Certificate and Bachelor of Business programmes.
 - c) Modules that can be taken by non Irish nationals with limited competence in English.
 - d) Language requirements for entry to all PLC¹ language modules.
 - e) Module structure for studies abroad with detail of module conditions, including detail of operational plan.

¹ Post Leaving Certificate

Panel recommendations

- 1) Consider the option of having the dissertation as an elective as opposed to a mandatory module.
- 2) Define a matrix of the assessment schedule and use same to consider if students will be over assessed, with the intention of shifting the emphasis more towards independent learning.
- 3) Reconsider class contact hours. The panel felt that these were relatively high across all years of the programme.
- 4) Review the approved course schedule to ensure that no pre-requisites exist between sequential odd and even semesters.
- 5) Review the learning outcomes of individual modules to ensure clear and appropriate articulation with framework of qualifications.
- 6) For studies abroad consider the following:
 - Adding more detail to the submission document regarding the management of students abroad.
 - Defining a minimum of 10 ECTS credits be taken in the host language while abroad.
 - Encouraging students to pursue international certification in the host language while abroad.
 - Defining a protocol for students wishing to exit directly with a level 7 qualification upon returning from year abroad.
- 7) Make minor amendments as discussed at panel meeting.

Panel observations

The panel commended the quality and relevance of the module International Selling and Sales Management in addition to the business elements of the language syllabi. The panel also commended the willingness of Institute staff present to engage in open and frank dialog through which their obvious enthusiasm for the new programme became evident.

Suggestion for future panels

The panel suggested that page colour coding is used for new modules within the submission document to differentiate from those previously validated as part of other programmes.

Panel signatures

Chairperson

Dr. Oliver Murphy _____ Date _____

Secretary

Dr. Diarmuid O'Callaghan _____ Date _____