

Validation Report



BN115

Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Community and Social Development

(240 ECTS credits leading to NFQ Level 8 Award)

with the following embedded programmes

BN025

Bachelor of Arts in Community and Social Development

(180 ECTS credits leading to NFQ Level 7 Award)

BN036

Higher Certificate in Arts in Community and Social Development

(120 ECTS credits leading to NFQ Level 6 Award)

BN313

Bachelor of Arts in Community and Social Development

(Add on award to BN036 - 60 ECTS credits leading to NFQ Level 7 Award)

BN415

Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Community and Social Development

(Add on award to BN025 - 60 ECTS credits leading to NFQ Level 8 Award)

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.

In keeping with the Institute's mission statement, course and programme development is on-going. Community and social development were identified as a potential area for development and further investigation indicated a strong demand for courses in this academic area. This programme supports the mission of the Institute and facilitates much wider access to the Institute by a cohort of potential students whose needs are currently not being met.

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
- needs identified through consultation with representatives of agencies/organisations with a remit in community and social development within the Institute's catchment area

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

Programme overview

This programme is designed to provide students with core knowledge in areas identified as essential for the development of professionals working in the area of community and social development.

Years 1 & 2

During the first two years of the programme students will undertake common modules divided into five academic streams. These include:

Sociology

The student will be challenged and encouraged to develop an understanding of society as a human collective and to understand issues of societal change, providing the student with an appreciation of the factors pertaining to societal development, change and the impact of these changes on the groups within society.

Psychology

The student will be challenged to locate the individual within the broader context of community development while giving a thorough foundation in psychology and understanding of psychological perspectives on human development.

Health awareness

The student will be provided with an understanding and appreciation of the significant factors relating to physical development and healthy lifestyles introducing the concepts of health inequalities, substance misuse and the psychology of addiction.

Community development

The student will be introduced to the theoretical principles that underpin the concept of community and begin an exploration into the issues that are relevant to community development such as an understanding of youth work, cultural competence, group development all of which will combine to support the students in examining social functioning within the community and develop an understanding of the social environment and cultural practices.

Applied studies

The student will acquire communication skills relevant to community and social development and undertake a project placement in year two, semester two, giving the students the opportunity to link theory to practice as they engage with a community based organisation to conduct a piece of work in conjunction with that organisation.

Years 3 & 4

Students will further their understanding of social and community development by choosing between two strands of study:

- Strand A: Social and Cultural Studies
- Strand B: Psychology and Community Health

The rationale for offering these diverse strands reflects the broad spectrum of areas that exist within social and community development.

Strand A: Social and Cultural Studies

This strand contains three key sub-streams namely:

Sociology and Government

Students will explore the structure and practice of government within the context of law, governance and policy development while also applying a sociological lens to the impact of institutions such as government and media on society. Students will be afforded the opportunity to analyse current trends in community development inclusive of local partnership, power dynamics and service delivery while also being given the opportunity to discuss the various layers of services available within the community and the interaction of groups within the community with these services.

Cultural competence

This stream of study allows students to explore the concepts of multiculturalism and diversity from a social policy, cultural mediation, anthropological and sociological perspectives and locate these issues within community and social development, giving students a comprehensive understanding of diversity relevant to working with individuals and groups in the community.

Applied studies

This stream follows from the applied studies mandatory stream at year one and two. Students will continue to develop their communication skills by exploring issue such how language is used in society and the cultural context of language and identity formation and their creative skills by exploring personal and group development. Within the context of this stream students will be given the opportunity to link theory to practice as they engage with a community or based organisation during an individual project placement. Students will study research methods and practice within this stream supporting them in developing their research skills and successfully completing their project placement.

Strand B: Psychology and Community Health

This strand contains three key sub-streams namely:

Psychology and interactive competence

Students explore in-depth a range of theoretical models and approaches providing a framework for working with individuals and groups within the community to best support them and meet their needs. Students will develop an understanding of the multitude of factors that contribute to psychological health and well-being and analyse a range of psychological issues that present as a barrier to community participation.

Health awareness

This stream follows on from the health awareness stream studied in year one and two. Strategies in the context of drug prevention, addiction treatment, mental health and health promotion from a treatment, policy and community development perspective are evaluated thus allowing the student to gain knowledge concerning the implementation and evaluation of health promotion and prevention programmes in various community settings.

Applied studies

This stream follows from the applied studies mandatory stream in year one and two. Students continue to develop their communication skills by exploring issue such as how language is used in society and the cultural context of language and identity formation and their creative skills by exploring personal and group development. Within the context of this stream students will be given the opportunity to apply theory to practice as they engage with a community based organisation during an individual project placement. Students will study research methods and practice within this stream supporting them in developing their research skills and successfully completing their project placement.

Programme detail

Programme title	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Community and Social Development
Award title	Bachelor of Arts
NFQ^I level	8
ECTS^{II} credits	240
Programme code	BN115
Banner code	BN_HCASD_8

Embedded awards

Banner code	ITB code	Programme title	Award title	ECTS credits	Format
BN_HCASD_7	BN025	Bachelor of Arts in Community and Social Development	Bachelor of Arts	Level 7 180 credits	Ab initio
BN_HCASD_C	BN036	Higher Certificate in Arts in Community and Social Development	Higher Certificate in Arts	Level 6 120 credits	Ab initio
BN_HCASD_D	BN313	Bachelor of Arts in Community and Social Development	Bachelor of Arts	Level 7 60 credits	Add on
BN_HCASD_B	BN415	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Community and Social Development	Bachelor of Arts (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 Institute of Technology Tralee
Panel member 1	Mr. Owen Ross Athlone Institute of Technology
Panel member 2	Dr. Teresa Nyland Health Service Executive
Panel member 3	Mr. John McHugh Carlow College
Panel member 4	Dr. Patricia Kennedy University College Dublin
In attendance	Dr. Diarmuid O'Callaghan IT Blanchardstown Mr. Michael Keane IT Blanchardstown
Date of Panel Meeting	Thursday 26 th March 2009

Institute staff present

Session I Meeting with Head of School & Programme Leaders

Mr. Michael Tobin, Head of School of Business and Humanities

Ms. Georgina Lawlor

Mr. Gael LeRoux

Ms. Lavinia McLean

Session II Meeting with lecturing staff

Mr. Michael Tobin, Head of School of Business and Humanities

Mr. Aiden Carthy

Ms. Deirdre McGrath

Ms. Denise Lyons

Mr. Emmet Tuite

Mr. Fergus Comerford

Mr. Gael LeRoux

Ms. Georgina Lawlor

Dr. Karen Feery

Ms. Lavinia McLean

Ms. Maria Kenneally

Mr. Mario Corbin

Ms. Mary O'Reilly

Ms. Nathalie Cazaux

Dr. Ruth Harris

Ms. Sandra Ratcliffe

Mr. Tom Donohoe

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 following discussion was satisfied with the planned staffing arrangements required in order to deliver this programme.

Evidence of consultation

To determine the need for and subject content for the proposed programme a consultation process was undertaken involving guidance counsellors from secondary schools and representatives of a selection of organisations with a remit in community and social development in the Blanchardstown area including:

- Community Culture and Sports
- Blanchardstown Local Drugs Task Force
- Greater Blanchardstown Development Project
- Citizens Information Centre
- Blanchardstown Area Partnership
- Barnardos
- Foróige

The panel was satisfied with this consultation.

Learner employment potential

Graduates of the programmes may seek employment in different areas of social and community development work such as community programme co-ordinators, local government advisors, training and development worker. Graduates may also be employed in a variety of sectors working with youth, marginalised or disadvantaged groups, ethnic minorities, social enterprises, health promotion. On completion of the programme graduates may gain employment in voluntary, statutory and private sector organisations or work with charities or non-governmental organisations (NGO's) at a national or international level.

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.

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 recommended that the wording of the title be reconsidered to truly capture the spirit of the programme's content. See recommendations.

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.

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.

Relevance

In recent decades Ireland has experienced an unprecedented economic growth and rapid social change with multiculturalism and multilingualism becoming everyday realities. New communities have developed and the composition and profile of existing communities has changed dramatically. The changes in the economic and social environment have had implications for all aspects of society including social policy and service delivery. The panel heard from the programme design team how it is within this context that the community and social development programme is relevant in supporting all stakeholders within the community to adapt to an ever changing economic and social environment through positive social change and tackling issues such as social exclusion and disadvantage.

Blanchardstown it was noted is a community that reflects the dramatic social, economical and cultural changes that have come to define contemporary Irish society. The Blanchardstown area constitutes one of the fastest changing parts of the country from a demographic point of view. In the 2006 census, County Fingal, in which Blanchardstown is located, is recorded as the fastest growing area in the country, while the Blanchardstown – Blakestown electoral district experienced the largest population growth nationwide.ⁱ Dublin 15 as an area has been a particularly high recipient of migrants given that 20.19% of its population are recorded as non-Irish nationals, double the national average.ⁱⁱ It was also noted that within the Blanchardstown area there is a wide range of community and social development programmes being delivered by community, voluntary and statutory organisations to tackle a broad spectrum of issues relating to tackling disadvantage, social justice, community empowerment, seeking to affect positive change for all stakeholders within the community. The proposed programme aims to support students to develop the skills, knowledge and competencies to work effectively within such organisations.

The panel recognised that the proposed programme is in keeping with ITB's mission statement to serve the needs of the local community and that it supports two priorities outlined in the Institute's current strategic planⁱⁱⁱ namely, the achievement of a more diverse student community and making ITB a vital resource for the region.

ⁱ 2006.Census 2006 Preliminary Report. <http://www.cso.ie/statistics/persclassbynationality2002.htm>.

ⁱⁱ Central Statistics Office 2007b. 2006 *Small Area Population Statistics (SAPS) – demographic variables. Theme 2 Migration and Ethnicity*. <http://beyond2020.cso.ie/Census/TableViewer/tableView.aspx>

ⁱⁱⁱ Strategic Plan 2006 -2011 making education accessible

Learner assessment

Through discussion with the design team, and from the submission document itself it was explained in detail to the panel the multiple modes of assessment, both formal and informal that will be employed. These included project work, assignment, self and peer assessment and group project assessment. The panel however raised concerns over the volume of learner assessment for the proposed programme. See recommendations.

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 allowing students to choose from various entry and exit points that support clear transfer and progression routes within the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). The panel highlighted the importance of mapping the programme standards towards potential future professional accreditation. See recommendations.

Decision of the panel

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

Banner code	ITB code	Programme title¹	Award title	ECTS credits	Format
BN_HCASD_8	BN115	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Community and Social Development	Bachelor of Arts (Honours)	Level 8 240 credits	Ab initio
BN_HCASD_7	BN025	Bachelor of Arts in Community and Social Development	Bachelor of Arts	Level 7 180 credits	Ab initio
BN_HCASD_C	BN036	Higher Certificate in Arts in Community and Social Development	Higher Certificate in Arts	Level 6 120 credits	Ab initio
BN_HCASD_D	BN313	Bachelor of Arts in Community and Social Development	Bachelor of Arts	Level 7 60 credits	Add on
BN_HCASD_B	BN415	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Community and Social Development	Bachelor of Arts (Honours)	Level 8 60 credits	Add on

¹ Refer to recommendation 1

Panel recommendations

1. Consider re-wording the title of the programme to “Social and Community Development” to more accurately reflect the spirit of the proposal.
2. Map the programme standards towards standards for “Quality Community Work” produced by the Community Workers Co-operative¹ as this may assist in acquiring professional accreditation in the future.
3. Reconsider the volume of assessment, capping the total number of major assessment events per semester at an appropriate number (perhaps 9) while furthering the use of integrated assessments.
4. Reconsider the contact hours particularly within years 1 and 2 aiming for a maximum more in line with national standards for Humanities programmes (typically between 18 and 20 hours).
5. Tabulate the indicative contact hours for programme delivery in full-time, part-time and accelerated modes.
6. Reconsider the syllabi of specific modules as mentioned during the panel meeting. Focus on key topics to further differentiate from related modules and eliminating any unnecessary overlap between modules.
7. Identify and incorporate, where possible, modules common with other existing programmes as previously validated.
8. Restrict reading lists to typically one essential text with up to ten recommended/further readings and standardise the format of references.
9. Revisit Institute policy on Admissions and Garda Vetting and update relevant sections of the submission document accordingly to facilitate the marketing of this programme.
10. Consider the use of a community profile or agency/organisation profile as a focus for the project module. Consider using the title of “Professional Practice Project”.
11. Review the content and terminology of the learning outcomes to ensure consistency, equity and relevance to specific NFQ levels throughout the submission document.
12. Reconsider and clarify module titles throughout submission document as discussed at panel meeting.
13. Review the module syllabi to ensure that no pre-requisites exist between sequential odd and even semesters, and that pre-requisites are only used when necessary.
14. Make other technical and minor amendments as discussed at the panel meeting.

¹ The Community Workers Co-operative (CWC) is a national network of individuals and organisations involved in community work and working for social change in Ireland. www.cwc.ie

Panel observations

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

Panel signatures

Chairperson

Dr. Oliver Murphy _____ Date _____

Secretary

Dr. Diarmuid O'Callaghan _____ Date _____