

Validation Report



BN516

**Master of Arts in Language Education (English as
a second language)**

Incorporating

BN515

**Postgraduate Diploma in Arts in Language Education (English as a second
language)**

&

BN716

**Certificate in Language Education (English as a second language).
Minor award of the Master of Arts in Language Education (English as a
second language).**

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 it's staff in addition to the strategy of the department/school/Institute and government educational policy
- identifying upskill needs required by both primary and secondary teachers in the local community

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

Programme overview

The Master of Arts in Language Education (English as a second language) is a programme comprising of three mandatory core modules, two specialist modules and a research project.

Mandatory core modules

- Language Awareness aims to heighten the students' sensitivity to language and the way languages work in the particular context of teaching English as a second language.
- Cultural Awareness and Intercultural Competence aim to develop students' intercultural competence and understanding of the cultural diversity that characterises the current Irish education system.
- Development of Communicative Competence and Literacy Skills aims to provide students with the knowledge and skills required to deal with the development of both oral and written skills in learners of English as a second language.

Specialist modules

- Second Language Acquisition: Theory and Practice (mandatory) is designed to equip course participants with the theoretical knowledge underpinning contemporary language learning approaches such as communicative language teaching and task-based learning, through study and critical analysis of second language acquisition theory.
- Computer Assisted Language Learning (elective) is of particular relevance to practising teachers who are keen to incorporate this content into their teaching.
- Race and Ethnicity: Theory and Practice (elective) 'Race', with its perceived biological basis which has been discredited, has frequently been replaced by ethnicity, a cultural phenomenon. Whilst the usage of 'race' as a valid social concept has been questioned, the term 'race', with numerous meanings, is still employed in certain contexts, including the legal domain, both in Ireland and internationally. This module aims to critically theorise and contextualise the concepts of 'race' and 'ethnicity'.

Research project

- Research project (mandatory) offers students the opportunity to undertake a piece of research on a topic within one of the major thematic fields namely the field of applied linguistics or the field of culture and society.

This programme aims to build on the knowledge, skills and competence acquired at undergraduate level and extend and enhance this knowledge giving it additional depth and breadth in the context of the acquisition of English as a second language. It aims to produce post-graduate degree holders with comprehensive knowledge to the forefront of learning in the context of education according to current educational and pedagogical principles and the skills and competence in keeping with the most up-to-date theories and practices with regard to the teaching of English as a second language in an evolving education sector.

Programme detail

Programme title	Master of Arts in Language Education (English as a second language)
Award title	Master of Arts
NFQ^I level	9
ECTS^{II} credits	90
Programme code	BN516
Banner code	BN_HLANE_R

Embedded awards

Banner code	ITB code	Programme title	Award title	ECTS credits
BN_HLANE_G	BN515	Postgraduate Diploma in Arts in Language Education (English as a second language)	Postgraduate Diploma in Arts	Level 9 60 credits
BN_HLANE_Q	BN716	Certificate ^{III} in Language Education (English as a second language). Minor award of the Master of Arts in Language Education (English as a second language).	Certificate in Language Education (English as a second language)	Level 9 36 credits

^I National Framework of Qualifications

^{II} European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System

^{III} This title is subject to national review by the Higher Education and Training Awards Council [HETAC]

Panel members

Chairperson	Mr Brian Bennett IT Carlow
Panel member 1	Ms Rose Dolan National University of Ireland Maynooth
Panel member 2	Dr Muiris Ó Laoire IT Tralee
Panel member 3	Mr Seán Bracken Coláiste Mhuire, Marino Institute of Education
Panel member 4	Ms Deirdre Kirwan Scoil Bhríde, Blanchardstown
In attendance	Dr Diarmuid O'Callaghan IT Blanchardstown Mr Michael Keane IT Blanchardstown
Date of Panel Meeting	Tuesday 12 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

Dr. Celesta McCann James, Head of Department of Humanities

Session II Head of School/Department & Programme Leader

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

Dr. Celesta McCann James, Head of Department of Humanities

Session III Meeting with Lecturing Staff

Dr. Celesta McCann James, Head of Department of Humanities

Dr. Ruth Harris

Dr. Bríd Ní Chonaill

Ms. Nathalie Cazaux

Dr. Karen Feery

Ms. Maria Kenneally

Dr. Mary Ann Kenny

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 no additional staffing nor additional facilities will be required in order to deliver this programme.

Evidence of consultation

To determine the needs and subject content for a Master of Arts in Language Education (English as a second language), consultation was carried out with current and former Master of Arts students on the Language Education programme in modern languages. Also a consultation session was held with key stakeholders in the Dublin 15 area and experts from the greater Dublin area on the 11th of June 2007.

These key stakeholders and experts included representatives of:

- Scoil Bhríde Girls National School Blanchardstown
- Blanchardstown Area Partnership
- St Attracta's Junior National School, Meadowbrook, Ballinteer
- Mary Mother of Hope School, Castaheaney
- Department of Education and Science
- Integrate Ireland Language and Training

The panel was satisfied with this consultation.

Learner employment potential

It is envisaged that most of the participants on this programme would be practising primary or second level teachers and this programme would be seen in the light of professional development. In this case the programme offers them an additional skill set which would enable them to specialise in the area of language support, or move into specialist roles within their teaching establishments in either teaching or management.

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 title of the minor award requires amendment as described in the 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.

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

The three core competency modules evolved from an already validated Postgraduate Diploma in Arts in Language Education (BN513/BN514), the syllabi for which is recognised as that which underpins language teaching in Ireland. These modules are:

- Language Awareness
- Cultural Awareness and Intercultural Competence
- Development of Communicative Competence and Literacy Skills

Through discussion with staff of the Institute it was found that the specialist modules evolved through interaction with both Primary and Secondary teachers.

The panel commended both the rationale of the proposed programme and the openness and flexibility of electives and were of the opinion that individual modules could be offered to third level lecturers to assist in the delivery of their programmes to foreign national students.

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 and group project assessment. 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 and from applicants with teaching qualifications and experience.

Decision of the panel

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

BN_HLANE_R	BN 516	Master of Arts in Language Education (English as a second language). – level 9, 90 ECTS credits
BN_HLANE_G	BN515	Postgraduate Diploma in Arts in Language Education (English as a second language) – level 9, 60 ECTS credits
BN_HLANE_Q	BN716	Certificate in Language Education (English as a second language). Minor award of the Master of Arts in Language Education – level 9, 36 ECTS credits

Conditions

This validation is subject to the following conditions:

1. The panel has requested that the title of the minor award originally proposed as “Diploma in Language Education (English as a second language). Minor award of the Master of Arts in Language Education Level 9 36 ECTS credits” be amended to “Certificate in Language Education (English as a second language). Minor award of the Master of Arts in Language Education Level 9 36 ECTS credits.” This modified title is subject to national review by HETAC.
2. The panel has requested that the learning outcomes and objectives of the two embedded awards are mapped against specific award standards.

Panel recommendations

- 1) Review the terminology of both programme and module titles considering the use of the word “additional” as opposed to the word “second” i.e. English as an additional language rather than English as a second language.
- 2) Review the spirit of the suggested employment opportunities for each of the various cohorts of applicants as outlined in the second paragraph on page 19 of the submission document.
- 3) Include reference to Postgraduate Diploma in Education as a specific relevant previous qualification in the entry requirements – page 10.
- 4) Provide clarity on assessment methods for each individual module within the submission document.
- 5) Embed use of information and communications technology (ICT) within content of each module.
- 6) Remove abbreviations from module titles.
- 7) Update reading lists as discussed at panel meeting.
- 8) Update common modules already validated for the existing programme BN510¹ to equally apply to this academic programme.
- 9) Make minor amendments as discussed at panel meeting.

Panel observations

The panel commended the quality of the proposal and were of the opinion that individual modules could be offered to third level lecturers as part of their personal and professional development.

¹ Master of Arts in Language Education (French)

Panel signatures

Chairperson

Mr. Brian Bennett _____ Date _____

Secretary

Dr. Diarmuid O'Callaghan _____ Date _____