

Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann
Quality and Qualifications Ireland
Validation Report of Expert Panel

Part 1 General Information

Provider: Institute of Physical Therapy and Applied Science Ltd. (IPTAS)

Date of Visit: 24 July 2013

Programme Submitted for Evaluation: Higher Certificate in Science in Applied Healthcare Practice
Leading to the award of: Higher Certificate in Science in Applied Healthcare Practice

Programme Recommended for Approval: Higher Certificate in Science in Applied Healthcare Practice
Leading to the award of: Higher Certificate in Science in Applied Healthcare Practice, Level 6, 120 ECTS

Panel of Experts

Name	Area of Expertise	Organisation
Dr Dermot Douglas	Biological Sciences Quality Assurance and Validation	Former Director of Academic Affairs, Institutes of Technology Ireland (IOTI)
Ms Elizabeth Fahey-McCarthy PhD (absent from visit due to illness, but contributed to the evaluation of the programme)	Nursing & Midwifery	Assistant Professor, School of Nursing and Midwifery, TCD
Dr. Mary McDonnell-Naughton Ms Cathriona Greene	Nursing & Midwifery Nursing & Midwifery	Lecturer, Athlone Institute of Technology A/Specialist Coordinator, Centre of Nursing and Midwifery Education - Waterford Regional Hospital
Mr. Walter Balfe		Manager, Awards and Certification, QQI

Summary

The Expert Panel (the Panel), having reviewed the documentation presented by IPTAS and considered the responses of the programme teams during the course of the evaluation meeting, will recommend approval of the proposed Higher Certificate in Science in Applied Healthcare Practice to QQI subject to the condition identified in the report. The Panel has also identified a number of recommendations which the programme team should consider.

The attached report addresses issues raised by the Panel in the context of the review.

Part 2 Findings of the Panel

2.1 Introduction

IPTAS is a privately owned third level college of higher education and professional training providing specialist education in the discipline of physical therapy for over two decades. It currently offers one programme, a 3 year B.Sc. in Applied Health Science (Level 7). An add-on Level 8 programme was validated by HETAC in July 2012 is due to commence in September 2013.

IPTAS' stated mission is to produce competent, caring practitioners and to support further development of the physical therapy profession.

2.2 Examination of the Programme

2.2.1 General

The panel received a comprehensive set of programme and support documentation in advance of the visit. The panel members were unanimous in expressing their praise for the very high quality of content and presentation of the submission documents.

The panel initially met with management to discuss resourcing and staffing issues for the programme as well as the overall programme design and methodologies. It was clear that much effort and expertise had been devoted to the research, planning and development of the programme and business plan.

Subsequently, the panel met with all the programme staff who presented each individual programme module's proposed syllabus and assessment strategy.

Following in depth discussion, the panel was able to express its support for the proposed submission for validation and its view that the programme would constitute a positive development in terms of provision.

2.2.1 Education and Training Requirements

The panel was satisfied that the programme is consistent with the provider's mission. The panel was also satisfied with the provider's case on the rationale for the programme and the research undertaken, including the consultation with industry, before the programme was proposed to QQI.

2.2.2 Protection of Enrolled Learners

Validation of a programme of education and training pursuant to Section 25 of the 2012 Act, is subject to QQI being satisfied that the provider concerned has arrangements in place in accordance with QQI interim procedures on Protection for Enrolled Learners.

2.2.3 Quality Assurance

The panel heard how the submission had been developed and approved internally within IPTAS' quality assurance structures and procedures. The panel was satisfied that those procedures had been applied to the development of the proposed programme and that quality assurance mechanisms are in place to ensure its provision, monitoring and review.

2.2.4 Programme Titles and Award Titles

The panel was satisfied that the title of the programme is clear, accurate and fit for the purpose of informing prospective learners and other stakeholders. The proposed title of the programme also encompasses QQI's related named award title.

2.3 Particular Aspects of Programme Provision

2.3.1 Unity

The programme design is consistent with the Core Validation Policy (2010) and the Policy on Assessment and Standards (2009). The programme has an underlying unifying theme and the modules are bonded by linkages which are either implicit or explicit. It was also clear how the standards of knowledge, skill and competence, determined for the named award to which the programme proposes to lead, evolve throughout the programme as a whole.

The linkages and integration between modules was evidently well understood by the programme tutors.

The panel expressed the view however that the *Fundamentals of Healthcare* module (Stage 1, 15 credits) should become a capstone module to reflect its importance, already expressed by having the highest credit value of all the modules.

2.3.2 Teaching and Learning

The programme documentation was very detailed in respect of objectives, learning outcomes and links to assessment at both programme and module level. Given that the programme is primarily based around work based learning, a lot of discussion was devoted to how this part of the programme would be organised, supported and monitored. The provider recognises the imperative of having a staff member acting as workplace learning coordinator, who will establish and maintain workplace learning agreements with all employers who have staff engaged in the programme. It is accepted that this person, not yet recruited, will need to be appropriately qualified from both the education and professional perspectives so as to bring the credibility necessary to establish meaningful learning agreements with employers. These learning agreements will need to be sufficiently substantive to allow learners to achieve the learning outcomes while at work.

The IPTAS teaching staff was very versant with their areas of responsibility and demonstrated their knowledge of and interest in their module areas. They have appropriate qualifications and experience to bring to the teaching of healthcare related content.

2.3.4 Standards

The learning outcomes of the programme were stated in such a way that the compliance with the standards determined by QQI for the award of Higher Certificate in Science was able to be assessed.

This standard was demonstrated to the panel's satisfaction on the occasion of the visit. If anything the panel felt that the content was such that it may have exceeded Level 6 Higher Certificate. The panel did agree that this programme, if validated, would establish a good benchmark for this level. In the words of one of the panel members, the programme is 'visionary and ahead of its time' and that IPTAS management is prescient in developing a programme which may address a learning need not yet fully recognised in public healthcare employment structures.

2.3.5 Learner Assessment

The programme's learner assessment methods are fully elaborated and consistent with the QQI's policy on fair and consistent assessment. The assessment methods are capable, amongst other things, of demonstrating attainment of the standards of knowledge, skill or competence, determined by QQI, for the related award.

The panel again noted the quality of the work which went into documenting the assessment system. It was agreed that the clarity of documentation will enhance the quality of the assessment process.

The panel did recommend that any assessment methodology which is ephemeral e.g. presentation, viva voce, would be recorded so that evidence would be available for external oversight when necessary.

2.3.6 Access, Transfer and Progression

The programme incorporates the procedures for access, transfer and progression established by the NQAI. The programme is in line with the requirements of the Qualifications Act and accommodates a variety of access and entry requirements from applicants.

The panel agreed that the stated entry requirements need to be made consistent in terms of previous qualifications required i.e.

- the reference to the 'FETAC Level 5 Certificate' is ambiguous and should be broadened to 'a QQI Level 5 Certificate'
- the requirements on Maths and English should be equalised across the various alternative access routes
- The access arrangements need to explicitly refer to Recognition of Prior Learning as part of the process.

The progression opportunities for graduates of the programme are not fully stated. The panel felt that this part of the document needs to be expanded.

2.3.7 Staffing and Physical Resources

The panel was satisfied that the necessary staffing levels will be in place and were satisfied with the level of qualifications and competence of the staff concerned.

The resources available to learners for the programme will be a combination of those provided directly by IPTAS and those available in the individual's workplace. The panel emphasised, and IPTAS accepted, the importance of ensuring, through the workplace learning agreements, that the necessary physical and human resources/supports and experiential opportunities are provided to each learner by his / her employer.

IPTAS also acknowledged the need to ensure the availability of equipment necessary to provide practical training and demonstrations in the training facilities it operates itself.

Part 3 Recommendation

The panel of experts recommend the validation of the programme:

Higher Certificate in Science in Applied Healthcare Practice

for the purposes of the award of

Higher Certificate in Science

subject to QQI's general conditions of approval under Section 84 Transition and Savings Provision, Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 2012.

3.1 Conditions

The panel of experts require that the provider should take note of the following conditions and that a satisfactory response to those conditions shall be received before the validation is considered by QQI.

The Provider must:

C1: ensure that a workplace learning coordinator is employed prior to the recruitment of any learners onto the programme.

3.2 Recommendations

The Provider is advised to:

R1 Ensure that all forms of assessment evidence is available for external oversight as necessary. This is with particular reference to assessment methodologies such as Presentations and Vivas, where recording of learner work is recommended

R2: require, as part of any workplace learning agreement, that the employer involved ensures that the workplace supervisor is appropriately qualified as a healthcare professional e.g. nurse, physiotherapist etc., and that said supervisor quotes a unique id (e.g. NMBI pin) when signing off on achievement of competencies by learners.

R3: expand the programme content related to progression opportunities for graduates of the programme. This expansion should include the detail of what recognition will be given by IPTAS to graduates who seek entry to its existing validated programme at level 7.

R4: Make Fundamentals of Healthcare a capstone module and make the amendments to assessment contingent on this change.

R5: make some amendments to the entry requirements as follows:

- Adopt the standard of specifying the age condition as being '23 on the 1st January of the year of application'
- Equalise the requirement for Maths and English across the various pre-qualifications
- Replace the ambiguous reference to 'the *FETAC Level 5 Certificate*' with '*a QQI level 5 Certificate*'
- Explicitly refer to Recognition of Prior Learning as part of the entry process

R6: include training in CPR in the programme. It could be certified using the Level 5 minor award in Occupational First Aid, which would be a useful addition to the learners.

R7: Emphasise throughout the programme the importance of healthcare assistants working within

the limits of their competence. This could be placed within the broader context of Risk Management.

R8: Make the following content changes to programme modules

- **Introduction to Professional Capabilities:** include specific input on Plagiarism
- **Structure and Function of the Body:** Consider including content on Genetics
- **Health Promotion & Nutrition:** use current units for energy i.e. Kilojoules
- **Management of Chronic Health Conditions:** emphasise risk management in the context of administration of medicines

Appendix 1: College Staff who met with Panel

Anne Mangan	Programme Development Director
John O'Sullivan	Managing Director
Ray Coughlan	External Advisor
Mick O'Sullivan	Business Development Manager
Patricia O'Sullivan	Tutor
Fionnuala Corcoran	Tutor
Colm Murphy	Tutor
Stephanie Quaile	Tutor
Catriona Barry	Tutor
Mark Sweeney	Tutor