

Validation Report of Expert Panel

Part 1 General Information

Provider Dublin Institute of Design (DID)

Date of Visit 07 February 2014

Proposed Programme Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Graphic Design

Proposed Award Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Graphic Design, NFQ Level 8, 180 ECTS

Expert Panel

Name	Job Title	Role on the Panel/Area of Expertise
Dr Annie Doona	President, Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology	Chair, Academic Quality Assurance, Learner Focus
Paul Nash	Lecturer, Athlone Institute of Technology	Programme design and delivery
James Greenslade	Head of Department of Design, Limerick Institute of Technology	Programme design and delivery
Cormac O' Kane	Head of Department of Design and Creative Media, Letterkenny Institute of Technology	Programme design and delivery
Carol Coffey	Head of TV Graphic Design Department, RTE	Industry practitioner

QQI, Quality Assurance Services personnel

Colette Harrison Manager, Provider Recognition

Kevin Henry Administration Executive, Provider Recognition

Summary

The Expert Panel (Panel), having reviewed the documentation presented by **Dublin Institute of Design (DID)** and considered the responses of the programme team during the course of the evaluation meeting, does not recommend approval of the proposed *Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Graphic Design* at NFQ Level 8 to the Programmes and Awards Executive Committee (PAEC) of QQI.

It is the view of the Panel that the programme as presented does not appropriately address the criteria and requirements for a programme leading to a Level 8 Bachelor of Arts (Honours).

Specifically the Panel has identified the following as issues:

- The structure, length and content of the programme do not meet the requirements of a Level 8 Bachelor of Arts (Honours).
- The entry process and requirements for the proposed programme require further consideration to ensure that applicants have the opportunity to demonstrate the appropriate interest, skills and potential required by target learners for participation on the proposed programme.
- The assessment strategy is not sufficient nor is it in-keeping with HETAC's *Assessment and Standards Policy, (2009)*.
- The level of learning resources and physical facilities are not considered sufficient to meet the demands of the proposed programme. An assessment and review of this area in the context of the proposed programme is required.
- Access to facilities and appropriate supports in relation to teaching and learning for students with disabilities need to be reviewed.

The Panel recommends that DID be permitted to make a resubmission of a Bachelor of Arts Programme to QQI, if the provider can adequately address the issues identified by the Panel. The Panel is of the view that the programme may be submitted at NFQ Level 7 leading to a Bachelor of Arts based on Level 7 standards, or alternately as a 4 year programme leading to a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) at Level 8 award, comprising 240 ECTS. The Panel noted that this application for validation was made as part of the HETAC legacy process. In the interest of consistency, a resubmission should be considered using the same process.

Part 2 Findings of the Panel

2.1 Introduction

DID was established in 1991 with a primary focus on delivering programmes in the field of Interior Design. Since then it has grown in size and in the range of programmes it offers. As well as programmes in Graphic Design, it offers programmes in Interior Design, Web Design and Fashion Design. DID have relationships with a number of awarding bodies including Edexcel and City & Guilds for a number of programmes it offers. DID offers programmes leading to a range of FET minor awards from FETAC/QQI. All programmes are provided in its premises in Kildare Street in Dublin.

In January 2011, DID applied to HETAC to become a recognised provider. An Institutional Approval Evaluation Panel visit took place on 25 January 2012. Further to conditions and recommendations made by the panel, a resubmission was required. The resubmission was received in March 2013 and QQI reconvened the Panel to conduct a further evaluation on 09 May 2013. This Panel recommended institutional approval subject to a number of conditions and recommendations. DID met the conditions set by the Institutional Approval Evaluation Panel, and submitted two programmes for programme validation under the legacy process, as per the savings provision, outlined in Section 84 of the Education and Training Act 2012. The programmes were developed using the HETAC Awards Standards in Art and Design.

The two programmes submitted by DID for evaluation: Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Interior Design and a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Graphic Design, both at NFQ Level 8, were evaluated by two Panels on 07 February 2014. Both panels had a common Chair and common panel members for overlapping modules with subject specific members covering Interior Design and Graphic Design.

2.2 Assessment of the Programme

2.2.1 Education and Training Requirements

The Panel expressed its concern that the proposed programme was a 3 year NFQ Level 8 honours degree, with an insufficient applicant selection process to ensure that learners seeking entry will have the capacity to successfully attain the intended learning outcomes of the proposed programme.

The Panel considers that a fundamental review of the proposed programme is required by DID to consider:

- A 4 year NFQ Level 8 programme proposal leading to a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) with significantly increased academic content, enhanced entry criteria and an appropriate selection methodology for applicants, or
- A 3 year NFQ Level 7 programme leading to a Bachelor of Arts, based on Level 7 award standards, including enhanced entry criteria and an appropriate selection methodology for applicants.

2.2.2 Protection of Enrolled Learners

Validation of a programme of education and training pursuant to Part 6 (Sections 64-67), of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 is subject to QQI being satisfied that the provider concerned has arrangements in place in accordance with the Protection of Enrolled Learners: Protocols for the Implementation of Part 6 of the 2012 Act. DID has expressed its intention to put a bond in place to meet these requirements. DID is aware these requirements need to be in place as a prerequisite condition of programme validation.

2.2.3 Quality Assurance

The Panel notes that DID has satisfied, or sought to satisfy the conditions as well as many of the recommendations arising out of the Institutional Approval Evaluation Panel visit of 09 May 2013. The Panel commended this achievement in the context of the significant investment in time, financial resources, and appointment of key senior staff that this required. These developments amongst others have led to significant improvements within the Quality Assurance processes of the Institute.

The Panel was assured that DID is committed to making the necessary investment in resources and facilities to ensure that the proposed programme can meet the required standard.

The Panel was informed that the programme submission was developed and approved internally in accordance with the Institute's Quality Assurance procedures.

The programme was designed to provide qualified graduates to work in the graphic design and

related fields such as typography, illustration, print, photography, interactivity and moving imagery. The Panel found little evidence that DID benchmarked its proposed programme with other programmes nationally and internationally (at the same level) in similar fields of learning which are designed to prepare graduates for similar roles.

2.2.4 Programme Titles and Award Titles

The programme title was considered appropriate and accurately reflected the general content of the proposed programme.

However, the Panel is of the view that the programme content submitted as a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Graphic Design is insufficient and lacks academic breath, depth and rigour of a programme leading to a major award at Level 8 on the NFQ.

2.2.5 Ethics

The Panel was assured of DID's commitment to maintaining the highest ethical standards when engaging with its learners. The Panel discussed issues of plagiarism and copyright which are relevant to this field of learning and are satisfied that DID is aware of its responsibilities to learners in these areas.

2.3 Particular Aspects of Programme Provision

2.3.1 Unity

The Panel discussed its concerns about a number of aspects of the programme design and content with the Institute, which can be summarised under the following headings:

Structure and delivery

- The programme should be restructured to strengthen the academic content for an NFQ Level 8 offering. The inclusion of critical-contextual studies, particularly at the Award stage is essential.
- The structure of the programme does not support learners to develop a unified understanding of the programme content. The programme would benefit from the inclusion of a capstone module.
- The imbalance between practical and theoretical content needs to be addressed. There is an overreliance on practical content, due to a deficit in theoretical content.
- The introduction of elective modules would significantly enhance the programme and increase specialisation opportunities for learners.

Programme content

- A revision of module content to include sufficient theoretical /academic content appropriate to the programme's learning outcomes for an NFQ Level 8 award.
- The opportunity to include a work placement module to add coherence to the programme should be considered.
- Introduction of content into a module in the area of copyright law and plagiarism would be of benefit to learners.
- Introduction of content into a module on academic writing would benefit the learners.
- Further development of module content in semiotics and typography is needed.
- The provision of opportunities for reflection on learning and self-directed learning would also

be of benefit to learners.

- The absence of effective formal links with industry weakens the programme. It fails to provide learners with a work placement opportunity and experience of developing real-world design project opportunities.
- There is a requirement to review the essential and recommended texts for each module to ensure that they include current relevant material and that the bibliographies are in a standardised and recognised format.

2.3.2 Teaching and Learning

The Panel commended the enthusiasm, commitment and subject knowledge of DID's staff.

The proposed programme approaches to teaching and learning were discussed in detail. The earlier comments on the requirement for greater academic depth and rigour are pertinent in this regard.

It was clear to the Panel that there is a commitment to the development of each learner on the programme.

The role of the Graphic Design programme board was discussed. The Panel considered that the programme board has a valuable role to play in ensuring greater integration of modules across the programme.

2.3.3 Teacher-Learner Dialogue

The modes of interaction between the teaching staff and the learners were elaborated upon satisfactorily.

Teaching staff who met with the Panel indicated a high level of commitment to the Institute and its learners. Although the majority of the teaching staff is part-time, they collectively displayed a high level of commitment to the Institute in how they plan to deliver the programme.

Teaching staff were observed by the Panel to be generally authoritative in their responses on the subject matter and content of the proposed programme. The requirements of delivering and quality assuring a higher education programme leading to a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) at NFQ Level 8 will be a significant challenge for staff who are more familiar with delivery at lower levels of the NFQ.

The Panel acknowledged the student support arrangements in place. However, concerns were expressed relating to the supports available for learners with disabilities.

2.3.4 Standards/Learning Outcomes

The programme was developed using the HETAC Awards Standards in Art and Design.

The Panel indicated general satisfaction with the majority of the programme learning outcomes as stated within the programme document.

The Panel identified that there were too many module learning outcomes in some areas which could affect appropriate assessment of the module content. The learning outcomes as specified were aligned with the learning outcomes of a Level 8 award, but were insufficiently underpinned by the programme content.

2.3.5 Learner Assessment

The assessment methods must be capable of demonstrating, amongst other things, attainment of the

standards of knowledge, skills or competence, determined by QQI, for the related award, a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) at NFQ Level 8.

The programme's learner assessment methods were discussed in detail. The lack of an assessment schedule for the programme was a significant gap and raised concerns that the assessment strategy for the programme was insufficiently developed. The Panel expressed concern that there appears to be a risk of over-assessment in some modules – from the material available on proposed module assessment.

The introduction of formative assessment opportunities would enhance the assessment strategy.

The panel advised DID to apply the appropriate sections of the *Assessment and Standards (2009)*, and *Core Validation Policy and Criteria (2010)* policies in order to ensure that its proposed assessment methodologies meet these requirements.

2.3.6 Access, Transfer and Progression

DID outlined their strategic objective of attracting learners through the CAO, and have a number of entry routes available to learners. The Panel is concerned that the entry routes do not require any selection process typical of a programme of this nature (portfolio assessment, interview etc.) to ensure that applicants have the capacity to achieve the award for which they have expressed an interest. The Panel considers this a serious deficit as the proposed programme is a 3 year NFQ Level 8 award and interested learners may not have the capacity needed to achieve the intended learning outcomes for the programme.

The Panel acknowledges that any selection process places an administrative and financial burden on the Institute. However it recommends that the Institute consider the *NQAI Policies, actions and procedures for Access, Transfer and Progression for Learners (2003)*

The Institute confirmed that learners applying to undertake the programme who do not have an English speaking background are required to achieve a minimum grade of 6 IELTS Academic . The Institute confirmed that it has formal progression arrangements in place with the University of South Wales for learners wishing to undertake a related Masters of Arts programme in Visual Communication, and articulated their commitment to developing further progression and transfer arrangements for interested learners.

2.3.7 Staffing and Physical Resources

The Panel was satisfied that the necessary staffing levels are in place and was generally satisfied with the level of qualifications and competence of the staff concerned. The Panel welcomes the establishment of a staff development programme.

The physical learning resources available are not considered adequate for the provision of an NFQ Level 8 programme.

The need to provide appropriate learning facilities and appropriate learning resources, including library study space, ICT (including investment in MAC computers and an A3 scanner for instance) and dedicated studio space and equipment was discussed with the Institute.

The Panel acknowledges that some work has been undertaken on the development of such resources in recent months and that DID is committed to making the necessary investment to put adequate

resources in place.

Library resources have improved since the Institutional Approval Evaluation Panel report. Further work needs to be done to ensure that learners have access to the texts and journals required to successfully undertake the programme at NFQ Level 8.

Part 3 Conditions and Recommendations

The Panel recognise that DID is committed to the delivery of a programme leading to an award at NFQ Level 7 and /or Level 8. However, any new programme submission must ensure that it fully meets the requirements of an academic programme leading to an award at these levels, and addresses the issues identified in this report.