Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann

Quality and Qualifications Ireland

Validation Report of Expert Panel

Part 1	General Information
Provider	Galway Business School
Date of Visit	4 October 2013
Programmes Evaluated	Bachelor of Business (Level 7, NFQ)
Programmes Recommended for Approval	Bachelor of Business (Level 7, NFQ)

Expert Panel

Name	Role/Area of Expertise	Organisation
Dr Barry O'Connor (Chair)	Registrar and Vice President, Academic Affairs/ Quality Assurance expertise	Cork Institute of Technology
Mr Cathal Kearney	Head of School of Business & Humanities	Dundalk Institute of Technology
Mr Des Gargan	Lecturer in Business Studies	National College of Ireland
Mr Sean Silke	Human Resources and Executive Coaching Consultant	Self-employed

QQI, Quality Assurance Services personnel (in attendance)	
Ms Angela Lambkin (Secretary)	Manager, Monitoring and Development
Mr Kevin Henry	Administration Officer, Initial Validation

Summary

The Expert Panel (the Panel), having reviewed the documentation presented by Galway Business School (the School) and considered the responses of the programme team during the course of the evaluation meeting, will recommend approval of the proposed *Bachelor of Business* to QQI, for a period of five years, subject to the QQI Executive satisfying itself that the conditions identified herein have been fulfilled. The Panel also requires that the School give consideration and respond to the recommendations, which have also been identified herein.

Part 2 Findings of the Panel

2.1 Introduction – Short contextual profile of the applicant and any current provision
The School was incorporated in 2002 and is located at Salthill, Galway. The School originally applied to become a HETAC registered provider in 2010. They are also registered with FETAC, offering a number of component FETAC awards since 2008.

HETAC undertook an Institutional Approval panel visit on 24 July 2011, and further to conditions and recommendations a resubmission was required. The resubmission was evaluated by a subsequent panel on 31 August 2012. Following receipt of a revised quality assurance document in April 2013, QQI invited a programme validation submission, to be evaluated under HET Awards Council's legacy processes, as per the provisions of the Education and Training Act 2012, including Protection for Enrolled Learner arrangements.

The Panel received the submission in advance for the proposed offering of a 3 year Bachelor of Business degree at NFQ Level 7, to be delivered on both a part and full-time basis.

The initial meeting between the Panel and David Niland (Chairman/Company Director), Celestine Rowland (Managing Director), Johanna Clancy (Registrar), and Una McMahon (General Manager) included discussion on developments since previous HETAC visits, governance systems, programme rationale and resource issues.

The School indicated that they envisage that this proposed offering will, over time, replace the current programmes offered at NFQ Levels 6 and 7 i.e. Diploma in Business and Advanced Diploma in Business (Institute of Commercial Management) and the Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Business Management (University of Wales).

2.2 Examination of the Programme

2.2.1 Education and Training Requirements
This proposed Bachelor of Business is at NFQ Level 7 (180 ECTS) and is proposed to be delivered in both full and part-time modes. The programme is targeted at two separate target audiences:
   1)   Full time (day): CAO/school leavers and international learners
   2)   Part-time (evening and block delivery [one Saturday per month]): local, largely mature students with experience of the business world.

The proposed programme is a broad-based generic Bachelor of Business NFQ Level 7 proposal, which has been designed with a view to subsequently developing an NFQ Level 8 add-on programme with potential specialisations in Marketing, Management, HRM or e-Business. This is intended to ensure that learners on the programme may make the successful transition from secondary and further education into a third-level study environment. This three-year programme is structured around 6 semesters with 3 or 4 modules (with either 5 or 10 ECTS) per semester. The proposed programme has electives built into Stages 2 and 3 to facilitate learner choice.

The School aims to provide learners with the skills, knowledge and competence required to manage successfully in a business environment and to succeed in the real-world. The Panel commended the quality of the proposed offering.   The Panel was satisfied that the programme was consistent with the School's mission; that the proposal was made to QQI with a clear rationale, makes efficient use of resources, and is appropriately cognisant of industry and stakeholder requirements.

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.

The School confirmed that transfer arrangements are in place with two providers, Griffith College and IBAT College, and has agreements in place to this effect.

2.2.3 Quality Assurance

The Panel was informed that the submission was developed and approved internally as a result of the application of the School's quality assurance 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.

The Panel acknowledges that the recommendations of the recent Institutional Approval panel visits appear to have been addressed and in particular observed:
- Appointment of personnel including appointment of a new Registrar;
- Encouraging developments in relation to the School's Quality Assurance procedures document, since the last Institutional Approval Panel visit; and
- Revised organisation structures, reflecting the advice of the Panel.

2.2.4 Programme Titles and Award Titles

Following discussion, 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 Panel was satisfied that the proposed title of the programme complies with the HET Awards Council's related Title of Named Awards.

The proposed title of the programme and award is Bachelor of Business. This was not an issue for the School or the Panel.

2.2.5 Ethics

The Panel noted the key role of the School's Registrar, who is responsible for managing the integrity of the School, overseeing quality assurance procedures, upholding the standards and development of the School, ensuring consistency of entry, including transfer and progression, course development and innovation, lecturer development and support, as well as networking and liaising with external agencies. The recent appointment of Dr Johanna Clancy was noted in this regard and the Panel commended the School on the strength of this appointment.

2.3 Particular Aspects of Programme Provision
2.3.1 Unity

The programme design is consistent with the HET Awards Council's Policy on Accumulation of Credits and Certification of Subjects (ACCS). 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 by the HET Awards Council for the Named Award to which the proposed programme leads, evolves throughout the programme as a whole.

The credit values and structures for the programme were reviewed and the following comments were made:

- The direct contact hours for the part-time delivery mode were deemed unsatisfactory in this context. The Panel made a number of suggestions in order to ease their concern in this regard: the School may wish to explore the possibility of running the programme on additional Saturdays, or extending the provision of RPL and APL arrangements, or amending entry-level criteria;

- The Panel discussed the aspects of an academically-led versus industry-led programme, and agreed that there is a need for more industry input locally in the Galway area and suggested that there is a need for 'thought leaders' to promote the School and keep delivery in-focus;

- The identification of a unique selling point for Galway Business School was suggested as an element of strategy for the School – to cover over-and-above the basics and what the School has identified as key characteristics. It was noted that the setting-up of a formal Industry Advisory Group would send out a message about the School as a current, responsive education provider which is with unique selling points and meaningful ties with industry. The excellent local business links of the School were noted by the Panel.

2.3.2 Teaching and Learning
With the exception of the Panel's concern regarding the differential in direct contact hours between the full and part-time delivery of the programme, the proposed programme approaches to teaching and learning were indicated and justified.

2.3.3 Teacher-Learner Dialogue
The modes of interaction between the teaching staff and the learners were elaborated upon satisfactorily.

Staff including tutors and lecturers who met with the Panel indicated a high level of commitment to the School. Although most teaching staff are part-time they were engaging and collectively displayed a high level of individual and group commitment to the School in how they plan to deliver the programme. The blend of more experienced and younger staff is to be commended.

Staff members were authoritative in their responses on subject matter and content proposed for the programme. Some issues arose in relation to the role of Exam Coordinator and the need for full-time resources in this area was identified.

The Panel commended the School on the engagement and responses of the programme team. It was acknowledged that their knowledge was extensive and appropriate.

2.3.4 Standards/Learning Outcomes

The Panel indicated general satisfaction with the learning outcomes as stated within the programme document – with inputs from consultant experts as part of the programme design – in their compliance with the HET Awards Council Business Standards determined for the award of: Bachelor of Business (NFQ, Level 7). However, the Panel made the following observations on the proposed programme schedule:

- The School should review the module offerings, for example: consideration should be given to offering a mandatory rather than elective Entrepreneurship module; and Operations Management module, an additional ICT module, with perhaps less emphasis on Marketing modules;

- Module content should be reviewed to avoid unnecessary overlap/duplication, for example: HRM and People and Change Management, Introduction to Business & Management; and Contemporary Business Management, Introduction to Accounting & Business and Financial Accounting;

- The School might consider amending module content to include additional worthwhile topics, for example: Introduction to Business & Management module might reference Business Function, Ethics and Culture, and Management of Change in the module content;

- The Introduction to Accounting for Business module was identified as being a very ambitious syllabus. Consideration might be given to making it a 10 credit module in Stage 1;

- Overlap/integration covering and separating the modules on HRM/Change Management, Accounting and Finance in year 1 and year 2. The Panel advise that the programme team should revisit this as certain elements are somewhat ambitious;

- The School should check the programme document and schedules to ensure accuracy in contact hours. The Business Information Systems shows 27 hours of contact in the module descriptor. However the programme schedule indicates 39 hours, which the Panel believes to be the correct duration;

- Modules should include role-plays in the teaching and learning strategy, e.g. in the Selling & Sales Management module;

- The School might reconsider the sequencing of modules between stages, for example, is a 10 credit Economics module best positioned in Stage 1?;

- The School should describe in greater detail the management of assessment for the Applied Research module, and might also consider making this a year-long module.

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, skills or competence, determined by QQI, for the related award, Bachelor of Business (NFQ, Level 7).

The Panel made the following observations on assessment, and the School is advised to consult with the HETAC policies *Assessment and Standards (December 2009)*, and *Core Validation Policy and Criteria (October 2010)* in this regard:

- An assessment schedule should be prepared;

- A matrix of the full schedule of assessments is required for the programme, to illustrate for learners what the requirements will be for the academic year ahead. This would also be of great assistance to lecturing staff;

- A Programme specific assessment strategy should be documented;

- The repeat assessment requirements should be documented at module level and outlined clearly in the respective module descriptors;

- A group-work assessment policy should be formulated, in light of the important role of group-work in the programme;

- Some rebalancing of assessment instruments is also suggested to reflect the practice elements and theory as appropriate;

- The Panel noted a lack of clarity with regard to a learner who repeats exams. It was stated that the option was for one repeat opportunity, with the option of repeating the year. This should be clarified within the programme document. Furthermore the procedures in relation to repeats of continuous assessment and/or group work assignments should be made explicit by the School;

- The need for the School to clearly document and publish to students and staff the rules in relation to compensation policy and practices, as well as policy on mitigating circumstances and plagiarism was emphasised to the School;

- The School should review and reply with regard to the balance between assessments and credits to ensure fairness and equity throughout. For example, instances where 5 credit modules such as Marketing Research has three pieces of individual assignments requiring a total of 6000 words. It was noted that this appears excessive when compared to other 10 credit modules, which have far less onerous assignments attached.

2.3.6 Access, Transfer and Progression
The programme is in line with the requirements of the Education and Training Act 2012 and the operational principles of the HET Awards Council, and accommodates a variety of access and entry requirements from applicants with related discipline expertise and from applicants who demonstrate extensive experiential learning in this field of study.

The School confirmed to the Panel that the NFQ Level 8 progression opportunities stated within the programme documentation have been finalised. This includes transfer to the appropriate Stage at Dublin Business School and Griffith College. Transfer to Athlone Institute of Technology at NFQ Level 8 was also confirmed. The programme document should be revised to reflect these developments.

Direct entry: via CAO

- Standard applicants:
  - Leaving Certificate (must have five subjects at OD3, including English or Irish and Mathematics) or equivalent attainment in UK GCE examinations.

- Non-standard applicants:
  - Mature students (over 23)
  - FETAC Level Full Award
  - International – Leaving Certificate equivalent (ref: Institutes of Technology Central Evaluation Forum). Transcripts must be provided.

Advanced entry: via Galway Business School

Entry based on the School policy on RPL (including APL and APEL) , as detailed in the Quality Assurance Handbook (QAH) Section 4 with the following minimum requirements:

- Advanced entry to year 2: 60 ECTS in cognate discipline
- Advanced entry to year 3: 120 ECTS in cognate discipline
- Advanced entry decisions/evaluations are made by the Head of Academic Affairs and the Programme Leader

The Panel requested the School to provide clarification of the details in the programme documentation regarding the advanced entry and RPL requirements particularly in respect of the part-time programme due to its shorter duration, which also required clarification.

2.3.7 Staffing and Physical Resources
The Panel was satisfied that the necessary staffing levels will be in place and was generally satisfied with the level of qualifications and competence of the staff concerned.

The Panel made the following observations regarding Staff Development:

- The Panel recommend that staff development be maintained, if not enhanced to ensure mentor support for the Director of Academic Affairs/Registrar and for the wider programme team staff.

- Some further detail should be provided around planned staff development.

- The Panel indicated a positive element of collegiality amongst teaching staff, which should continue. Staff, although part-time, have much experience which can be shared.

- Some points regarding strategic alliances with NUIG/GMIT and for learner library access were discussed. The School also indicated that they planned to use experts from these institutions as guest lecturers. These alliances and external contributions should be detailed within the course material.

- The School strongly stated that the excellent learning experience, with small class sizes, induction, good pastoral care, individual supports, including developing the key skills of learner for the workplace. In-house guidance and psychometric testing were also noted as part of the programme.

Part 3 Conditions and Recommendations

The panel of experts recommend the validation of the programme:

Programme Title: Bachelor of Business, Level 7 (180 ECTS)

for the purposes of the award of:

Award Title: Bachelor of Business

Subject to:
- The general conditions of approval under Section 84 Transition and Savings Provision, Education and Training Act 2012.
- QQl Executive satisfying itself that the conditions identified in 3.1 (below) have been met and the School give consideration to each of the recommendations identified within this report particularly 3.2 (below), but also throughout the report.

3.1 Conditions
Conditions of validation must be addressed by the provider prior to the conclusion of the validation process and the Panel requires that the School respond satisfactorily to the following conditions before the validation will be recommended by the Panel to QQI.   The Panel declares that the School must ensure that:
a) Every module descriptor explicitly indicates the assessment approaches/regime.
b) The reassessment strategy is made explicit in each module descriptor.
c) An assessment matrix is prepared for every module, with the detailed class examination schedule clarified and in place.
d) The role of Examination Secretary/Coordinator to be established on a formal footing, and clarification as to how the assessment processes are managed, with details of all assessment procedures to be made explicit.
e) The School amend the direct learning hours of the part-time programme to no less than two thirds of the full time proposal, and certainly more than a half, which is currently proposed. The part time programme should be resubmitted with revised schedules to reflect this.
f) Observations and suggestions of the panel as set out in section 2.3.5 to be addressed.

3.2 Recommendations
The School is advised to take note of the following recommendations and respond to each recommendation in the context of the validation of the proposed offering:
a) Consider the title of each module with reference to nationally agreed norms when known and in accordance with QQI requirements.
b) Formative assessment policy to be established and include a policy on group work assessment to be established in the School.
c) Staff development to be maintained or enhanced by the School Management.
d) Level of assessment to be monitored to ensure a balance of assessment overall to ensure appropriate measure of the load for the individual and assessment to be proportionate to module credit value.
e) School to identify and publish the unique selling point of the course and organisation as part of its strategic direction.
f) Library facilities to be improved commensurate with the ambitions of the School.
g) Industry advisory boards to be established on a formal footing.

Appendix 1: Overview of College Staff

Management & Administration	Title/Primary Role
Dr Johanna Clancy	Registrar
Ms Carol Guilfoyle	Administration and Student Services
Ms Una McMahon	General Manager
Mr David Niland	Chairman/Company Director
Ms Celestine Rowland	Managing Director
Lecturing Staff	**Lectures in the following Modules**
Ms Orla Colleran	Marketing Research; Selling and Sales Management; International Marketing
Mr Kieran Conroy	Business Strategy Case Analysis; Contemporary Business Management
Mr Cathal Esler	Human Resource Management
Ms Gabriela Gliga	Introduction to Marketing; Consumer Behaviour; Marketing Management
Ms Seóna Joyce	Introduction to Business & Management; Business Communications
Ms Niamh Kavanagh	Business Law
Ms Ita Kelly	Entrepreneurship; People and Change Management; Project and Service Management
Dr Robert J. Loughnane	Computer Applications for Business; Business Information Systems; Quantitative Methods; Digital Marketing (Web Design)
Dr Mary Quinn	Learn-to-learn
Mr Cian E. Twomey	Finance (also Programme Leader)
Ms Dinali Wijeratne	The Economic Environment

Programme Teaching Staff Amendments

Stage	Semester 1 Module Name	Author	Defender (Person to deliver)	Semester 2 Module Name	Author	Defender (Person to deliver)
Stage 1	Learn to Learn	**Jennifer McGrath** (BBus, PG. Ed., Masters (on-going)	**Dr Mary Quinn (**PhD, MA, MEng, B.Eng)	Quantitative Methods	**Tony Higgins** BE Mech Eng, MA in Music Tech	**Dr Bob Loughnane** (PhD, BSc)
	Computer Applications for Business	**Sean Rattigan (**B.IT, PG Dip MBA,LLB)	**Dr Bob Loughnane** (PhD, BSc)	Introduction to Accounting for Business	**Dinali Wijeratne (**B.Comm, MBA, PhD (ongoing)	**Dinali Wijeratne**
	Introduction to Business & Management	**Seona Joyce (**BA, MA Ed (on-going)	**Dinali Wijeratne (**B.Comm, MBA, PhD (ongoing)	Introduction to Marketing	**Gabriela Gliga (**BA PG Bus MBS, PhD (ongoing)	**Gabriela Gliga**
	The Economic Environment	**Dinali Wijeratne (**B.Comm, MBA, PhD (ongoing)	**Dinali Wijeratne**	Business Communications	**Seona Joyce (**BA, MA Ed (on-going)	**Dr Mary Quinn (**PhD, MA, MEng, B.Eng)
Stage 2	Semester 1 Module Name	Author	Defender (Person to deliver)	Semester 2 Module Name	Author	Defender (Person to deliver)
Stage 2	Consumer Behaviour	**Gabriela Gliga (**BA PG Bus MBS, PhD (ongoing)	**Gabriela Gliga**	Marketing Research	**Orla Colleran (**B.Comm Dip MP MBS)	**Orla Colleran**
	Business Information Systems	**Sean Rattigan** B.IT, PG Dip MBA, LLB)	**Dr Bob Loughnane** (PhD, BSc)	Business Law	**Sean Rattigan / Niamh Kavanagh**	**Niamh Kavanagh** (BA, LLB)
	Contemporary Business Management	**Kealan Flynn (**BA MA	**Cathal Esler** (BA, Dip Mgmt,	Financial Accounting	**Cian Twomey (**B.Comm	**Cian Twomey**

		MBA)	MBS HRM)		MSc Econ PG Dip T&L PhD. (ongoing)	
	Entrepreneurship (E)	**Ita Kelly (**B.E, MSc HRM)	**Ita Kelly**	People and Change Management (E)	**Ita Kelly** B.E, MSc HRM)	**Ita Kelly**
	Digital Marketing (Web design) (E)	**Sean Rattigan (**B.IT, PG Dip MBA,LLB)**/ Gabriela Gliga (**BA PG Bus MBS, PhD (ongoing)	**Dr Bob Loughnane** (PhD, BSc)	Selling and Sales Management (E)	**Orla Colleran (**B.Comm Dip MP MBS)	**Orla Colleran**
Stage 3	**Semester 1 Module Name**	**Author**	**Defender (Person to deliver)**	**Semester 2 Module Name**	**Author**	**Defender (Person to deliver)**
Stage 3	Marketing Management	**Gabriela Gliga (**BA PG Bus MBS, PHD (ongoing)**/ Orla Colleran (**B.Comm Dip MP MBS)	**Orla Colleran**	Business Strategy and Case Analysis	**Kealan Flynn (**BA MA MBA)	**Kieran Conroy** (BBus, MBS, PhD ongoing)
	Project and Service Management (E)	**Ita Kelly (**B.E, MSc HRM)	**Ita Kelly**	Applied Business Research	**Kealan Flynn** BA MA MBA)	**Cian Twomey (**B.Comm MSc Econ PG Dip T&L PhD. (ongoing)
	International Marketing (E)	**Orla Colleran (**B.Comm Dip MP MBS)	**Orla Colleran**	Human Resource Management	**Cathal Esler (**BA, Dip Mgmt, MBS HRM)	**Cathal Esler**