



Appendix 5.3

LETTERKENNY INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

PERIODIC PROGRAMME EVALUATION

Report of the External Expert Group

PART 1 **GENERAL INFORMATION**

SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT: School of Tourism

DATE OF VISITATION: 31 May and 1 June

MEMBERS OF EXTERNAL EXPERT GROUP (EEG):

Dr Ken Carroll, Registrar, IT Tallaght (Chair)
Eoin Langan, Head of School of Business and Hospitality, Athlone IT
Dr Denise O Leary, Assistant Head of School of Hospitality Management and Tourism, Dublin
Institute of Technology
Frances Devine, Course Director for the MSc International Event Management, Ulster University.
Gerard Moore, General Manager, Sligo Park Hotel
Michael Heaney, Údarás na Gaeltachta
Dylan Doherty, Benny and Co Restaurant, Ballyboffey – Alumni
Kelly Maguire, IT Sligo Tourism PhD Student

SECRETARY TO EEG: Michael Margey, Head of School of Business

INSTITUTE STAFF:

Dr Seán Duffy, Head of School of Tourism
Ciarán ó hAnnracháin, Head of Department Hospitality, Tourism and Culinary Arts

Lecturers
Noleen Boyle
Patrick Brennan
Moragh Canney
Alison Cannon
Rosemary Dewhirst
Tim Dewhirst
Patrice Duffy
Mary Gillen
Deirdre MacNamara
Eloise McGinty
Lizzie McKenzie

Eddie McMenamin
Karl McNulty
Gabriel McSharry
Conor McTiernan
Joe Molloy
Bernie O'Malley
Ciara Quinlan
Helena Quinn
Jonathan Sultan

Note: it is Institute policy that all New Programme Validations are published on the LYIT website

PART 2 **FINDINGS OF THE EXTERNAL EXPERT GROUP**

The External Expert Group is satisfied that the self-study and revised programmes adequately addresses the following criteria:

(1) Academic Processes

A fundamental review of the programmatic area is clearly set out in the self-study document.

The self-study demonstrates how the Institute's Quality Assurance procedures have been applied in the development of the self-study and in revising the current portfolio of programmes taking cognisance of the relevant QQI standards, and that satisfactory procedures exist for the ongoing monitoring of these programmes.

(2) Student Throughput

Enrolment and examination statistics are adequately addressed and details are presented of appropriate special initiatives in relation to admissions e.g. broadening access, mature students, facilitating gender equality.

(3) Review of Course Design

A sufficient description of the revision of each programme, highlighting any changes implemented or proposed, has been provided. In addition, the course schedules in operation at the time of the previous review together with course schedules proposed as part of the current PPE are presented.

(4) Assessment

Procedures in place for the assessment of learners are documented. The methods for assessment of learners (i) are fair and consistent and comply with standards determined by QQI, (ii) are in keeping with the National Framework of Qualifications, (iii) are effective in measuring the students' attainment of the intended learning outcomes, (iv) contribute to the total learning experience, and (v) encourage creativity and originality in demonstrating achievement of the intended learning outcomes.

(5) Employment and Further Studies of Awardees

Employment gained and further studies undertaken by awardees is appropriately detailed and analysed in comparative tabular format.

(6) National and International Transfers

Evidence of commitment to co-operation with inter-institutional linkages, both national and transnational, is set out, including the structures in place to facilitate these arrangements.

(7) Review of Laboratory, Workshop, Studio and Other Facilities

The necessary facilities available in terms of accommodation, equipment, and library and information technology resources are satisfactory to support the revised programmes.

The panel notes that a €3 million development fund delivered over 4 years has been secured by the School of Tourism to upgrade and renovate facilities at the Killybegs campus. Those works have commenced.

(8) Deployment and Development of Academic Staff

The staffing levels are appropriate and the levels of qualifications and competence of the staff is sufficient to deliver the programme.

(9) Links with Industry, Business and the Wider Community

Evidence is presented that the School/Department actively engages with the world of work and the wider community in order to maintain a high degree of relevance in its programmes and in its research activity. The procedures and processes used to establish and maintain these links are described.

In particular the means by which School/Department elicits from industry, educational interests, public bodies and professional bodies how well the programmes meet their demands is included. The School/Department also examines its programmes against the relevant offerings of other higher education institutions.

(10) Research

The self-study documents postgraduate research carried out by learners in the previous five years together with School/Departments plans for the next five years.

Research conducted by staff since the previous review is also detailed together with plans for the next five years.

(11) Course Delivery Methodologies

Evidence is provided of innovation in relation to teaching, such as the use of new types of educational technology, teaching strategies and methodologies.

(12) Adult and Continuing Education

Information is presented in relation to adult education provision which has evolved in the Institute over the previous five years in response to the perceived needs of industry and the local community.

(13) Academic Regulations

The self-study sets out the form of regulations made by the Governing Body on the advice of the Academic Council.

(14) Development Plan

A coherent plan for the School/Department for the succeeding five years is included.

(15) Programme Documents

Revised programmes are fully justified in terms of their approach to teaching and learning, alignment with the relevant QQI standard, programme content, and assessment methods.

QQI Standards: QQI determines, for each named award, the specific standard of knowledge, skill and competence that must be acquired by the learner before that award can be made. The learning outcomes of the programme are stated in such a way that the compliance with the appropriate QQI standard is demonstrated.

Revised Programme Titles and Award Titles: Any revised award titles are consistent with the named awards determined by QQI. The programme titles are clear, accurate, succinct, and fit for the purpose of informing prospective learners and other stakeholders.

Access, Transfer and Progression: Revised programmes incorporate the procedures for access, transfer and progression that have been established by QQI and are consistent with the policy of QQI, awards accommodate a variety of access and entry requirements.

PART 3 RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONDITIONS

Commendations:

- **Management and staff are commended for** maintaining ambition and commitment to addressing issues on multiple fronts in a challenging environment. They engaged with the Panel with enthusiasm in an open and constructive manner.
- **Staffing:** There has been an ongoing focus on staff development, upskilling and flexibility to meet a changing environment in higher education and student profile within the School of Tourism.
- **Engagement:** Evidence was presented of extensive engagement with key stakeholders (industry, public bodies, schools & community) in recent years, and a commitment to continue this as key channel for future development and growth.
- **Student centric focus: An open-door policy** is operated by lecturers and support staff to engage with students and to support in particular mature students transitions back to education. Library facility offers comprehensive coverage and supportive staff. Students reported a clear focus on driving and developing them to achieve their maximum potential.
- **Placement:** a very supportive approach is provided throughout the placement process for students.
- **Transition programme:** a specific programme developed by the School of Tourism with secondary schools and supported by industry to promote education pathways and engage with second level students.
- **Module Sharing:** comprehensive module sharing occurs across programmes and good evidence of consolidation of programme portfolio with a range of entry and exit points for diverse learners was presented.
- **Funding:** success in securing additional funding to support and contribute to the development of facilities at Killybegs contributing to a sustainable future.

General Recommendations and Conditions:

For the attention of the Academic Council:

The External Expert Group advises the Academic Council that the Institute and the School/Department should take cognisance of following recommendations:

The response from the School of Tourism to the External Expert Group's Recommendations are presented in italics below.

PPE documentation – general comments:

The release of documentation to Panel members was relatively close to the date of the panel visitation (circa 10 days or less). Efforts should be made to ensure it is provided much sooner to facilitate a more critical reading in advance of the visitation.

The essence of the review process is a critical self-evaluation which is documented in the Self Evaluation Review (SER) report. It was the view of the panel that the documentation lacked focus on certain issues namely:

- A SWOT or equivalent analysis was not evident
 - Much programme performance data was provided on a year by year basis. More use of consolidated data tables / graphics to show 5 year data (less in the case of more recently validated programmes) with identification of underlying trends and a concise critical analysis of same would have been helpful.
 - An analysis of CAO data to reveal underlying trends on programme demand and popularity should be included.
 - An analysis of graduate outcomes and career destinations and would have been of interest
- *In preparing the School Review, the School of Tourism followed the LYIT PPE Guidelines and followed the agreed format for each of the PPE documents (Parts A, B and C). However, the School accepts the panel's recommendations and will ensure that elements of critical self-evaluation are prominent in annual reports and all other future reviews.*
- *Initially, the programme performance data was presented in consolidated tables. This was revised and presented on a year-by-year basis following a recommendation from the internal reviewers.*
- *An analysis of CAO data with a focus on the 2016 intake was presented in Part A, Chapter 10, p 143-144.*
- *Details, including graduate outcomes and career destinations, from the School of Tourism Graduate Destination Studies (2012- 2016) were presented in Part A, Chapter 4, p 49 -54.*

Strategic Planning:

The Self Evaluation Review (SER) requires an element of critical self-evaluation which was not always evident in the documentation provided.

The process would have really benefited from the performance and inclusion of a SWOT (or equivalent) analysis and a strategic positioning of the School for the future.

It is highly recommended that the School conduct such a critical analysis as a key element of their strategic planning exercise by the next midterm review point.

- *The recommendations are accepted and will form part of future School Reviews.*

Staff planning:

While there is very good evidence of staff development over the last five years with a significant number having completed, or nearing completion of Masters' and PhD qualifications, there is a need to establish a strategic alignment between staff development (CPD) and programme development needs for the future; the focus here would be on enhancement of core specialist skillsets reflective of the current state-of-the-art in each specialism.

It is recommended that the School develop, as part of its overall Strategic Plan, a concise but clearly articulated mapping for CPD linked to future of programme development needs to take cognizance of the changing needs of learners, business and community stakeholders. A clear 5-year view and roadmap is required. Amongst other things, it should consider the changing diversity of learners (full-time, part-time, work-based, online, distance etc.) and the challenges these present, and an alignment with the Technological University (TU) ambition of Letterkenny Institute of Technology and its partners in the Connacht Ulster Alliance.

- *The recommendations are accepted and will form part of future School Reviews. In particular, the School will endeavour to align staff development plans with programme development needs. The School will seek Institute support towards the achievement of its staff development goals.*

Student Recruitment Planning:

Good evidence of initiatives undertaken to attract and retain students, both traditional and non-traditional, was provided. Through various initiatives significant growth in numbers has been achieved in the accommodation of non-traditional students in particular. Feedback from employers suggests there is potential for growth in this area but it requires a creative design of programmes to accommodate the diversity of need in this group of learners.

It is recommended that a formalised approach be developed for the ongoing activities of the School to provide a structured plan focused on increasing student numbers in the School via creative recruitment and progression gateways. The further development of the TASTY programme for transition year students at second level is a good example of an initiative that could be extended to other schools in the region.

- *The School of Tourism welcomes the recommendation that 'a formalised approach be developed' for student recruitment and will work closely with LYIT's central services and marketing department to achieve this.*
- *The School of Tourism is actively involved in the development and promotion of the 'TASTY' programme for Transition Year students and plans to engage with this programme on an annual basis.*
- *The School is also the education partner with Donegal County Council/Donegal Tourism Ltd. in providing a four-week tourism-training programme for transition year students in two-second level schools in Donegal. It is planned to expand this programme to other schools over the next two years.*

This should include positioning and future sustainability with regard to mix of students in terms of different market segments such as fulltime, part-time, on-campus, off campus, WBL, upskilling, etc. and the use of alternative modes of delivery e.g. work based, e-learning. It is recommended that the School look at the new Apprenticeship programmes under development nationally as another avenue for exploration either as a lead institution or as a partner.

- *The School is actively considering the opportunities for new apprenticeships and has engaged with colleagues in IT Tralee in relation to the Chef de Partie and Sous Chef Apprenticeships which are in development.*
- *In September 2017, in conjunction with the Irish Hotels Federation, the School submitted two applications for new apprenticeships in (i) Food Service Operations and (ii) Front Office Operations.*
- *In addition; the School has collaborated with the Irish Hotels Federation in relation to the submission of a national Hospitality Skills Net application focusing on industry-based training. An application (to be submitted in November 2017) will be based on the recently validated Level 7 programme – BA in Hospitality Management.*

Research (& consultancy) planning:

As a part of building a distinctive brand for the School, developing a research development and consultancy (RD&C) profile would be beneficial. There are evident green shoots suggestive of a growing RD&C capability within the School but it requires focus and direction to create a coherent and sustainable development trajectory.

It is recommended that consideration be given to formulating a strategy linked to positioning of the School as a strategic resource for the county and region (creation of a unique selling point), and aligned with the Technological University (TU) ambition of Letterkenny Institute of Technology and its partners in the Connacht Ulster Alliance.

Staff engaged in RD&C activity should be encouraged to look more towards publication of research reports and papers to augment their active participation at conferences. In time, this should be progressing towards development of Level 9 opportunities for students and graduates; for this to succeed, development of staff expertise in their specific domains will be required (see staff development recommendations above).

- *The School of Tourism welcomes the recommendation that ‘... consideration be given to formulating a strategy linked to positioning of the School as a strategic resource for the county and region ...’ This will form part of the School’s Development Plan and will also form part of the School’s input to the new LYIT Strategic Plan due to be finalised in 2018.*
- *As staff expertise grows in terms of research and the achievement of postgraduate qualifications, staff will be encouraged and supported towards the publication of research reports and papers in journals and at conferences.*

Industry Linkages:

Good evidence of engagement with key stakeholders from industry, public bodies, and the wider community was presented. There is however a need to leverage this good work and maximise opportunities for the School to develop effective initiatives in partnership with those key stakeholders. This may include actions to:

- Develop a (Donegal) brand – flagship that industry players want to be associated with and take value from e.g. Marine Tourism - a good example of what can be done.
- Upskilling of existing industry staff base via flexible LLL/WBL/block delivery all of which are very attractive to industry
- Consider developing an Industry Advisory Panel with standing periodic meetings per year, having formal structures to support engagement and closed feedback loops to employers to promote development of industry focused upskilling LLL programmes. Such an advisory panel could also support the identification and development of RD&C activity to promote further mutual gain.

- *The School recognises that the range of education programmes it offers has changed considerably in terms of subject areas, length of programmes and modes of delivery. All of which have been in response to industry needs. The School needs to consolidate these efforts and ensure that the wider industry/community are aware of the 'new offerings' and capacity within the School.*
- *The School welcomes the panel's recommendations in this regard and will use them as the basis for the development of a School Plan.*

Branding for the School of Tourism and the Killybegs campus:

Consider a new approach to branding and marketing to give greater visibility to prospective students (traditional and non-traditional, regional, national and international), to industry, public bodies, schools & community.

Consider a change name from 'Tourism' to show a greater focus on the diversity of the Schools activity and a branding to better encapsulate what it does and can do.

- *The School of Tourism is very conscious of its development over the past decade and the increase in focus beyond the traditional hotel and catering programmes to now include Marine Tourism, Culinary Science, Seafood and other Food Product Development specialisms. Branding and Marketing for the next decade will have to take cognisance of these changes.*
- *The School will work with the LYIT Executive in order to ensure that both the School and the Killybegs Campus are both branded and promoted in order to increase learner numbers, campus activity and long-term sustainability.*

Transferable skills /Graduate attributes:

It is recommended that a statement on graduate attributes be included in the SER documentation and a critical analysis on the success or otherwise in supporting learners to achieve them. Greater clarity on how transferable skills and graduate attributes are achieved, and are explicitly embedded in the assessment strategies deployed at programme level is also required.

- *The School of Tourism is an active participant in the current Institute wide development of graduate attribute statements and once developed will incorporate such statements within programme documents and assessment strategies.*

Learner Assessment:

The panel notes that an institute-wide guideline on learner assessment strategy has been developed. However, it is recommended that the School needs to explicitly articulate how this is deployed at a programme level with clear alignment with QQI guidelines and best practice. For the portfolio of programmes reviewed,

- Workload management and planning needs to be reviewed to avoid bunching; in some instances this bunching was readily explained but was not clear in the documentation provided. During the visitation, an example of a Module Briefing document made available to students was presented to the panel which provided a very good example of how this should and is being done.
 - A greater variety of types of assessment and feedback should be considered
 - Consider opportunities to increase cross/shared module assessment, integrated assessment
 - Increase focus on the alignment of learner assessment with learning outcomes
 - Review MLO to enhance alignment with assessment
- *The School will adopt the above recommendations in relation to learner assessment and will pursue their implementation via programme boards and programme teams.*

- *It is acknowledged that future review documentation should include full examples of actual practice, such as existing module briefing documents referenced above.*

Student feedback:

The panel met with and were very impressed by a selection of current students including full-time, part-time and mature students. Students spoke highly of their experiences in the School of Tourism and accessibility of staff at every stage in their educational journey. Student involvement in Programme Boards and the collection of student feedback through local QA1 & 3 forms and the national ISSE survey (Irish Survey of Student Engagement) was evident.

However, it is recommended that greater attention be given to providing evidence on how student feedback is used to inform and direct supporting actions and changes in programme design, delivery, and teaching, learning and assessment. Summary evidence of this would have been expected in the SER documentation.

It is further recommended that there be greater critical evaluation of QA1-3 and ISSE data as part of the self-evaluation process. An explicit evaluation of ISSE data to identify areas of strengths and concerns, and identify opportunities to improve is required.

- *Now that ISSE data and data for QA 1-3 surveys (collected on-line) are available from previous years for comparative purposes, the data will be evaluated beyond what was presented in the PPE documents. The analysis will be undertaken in order to identify strengths, concerns and opportunities for improvement on an annual basis.*

Progression/retention:

A critical review of data was required to identify and explain trends/underlying issues with regard to programme performance and student retention and progression. While tabulated data was provided on an annual basis, a consolidated data table showing the 5-year data is recommended to allow reviewers see underlying trends. This should be accompanied by a concise critical commentary on such trends in order that lessons can be learned and shared.

- *As mentioned in the response to 'PPE Documentation' above, initially, the programme performance data was presented in consolidated tables (showing data from a 5-year period). This was revised and presented on a year-by-year basis following a recommendation from the internal reviewers.*
- *The presentation of data in the future will be formatted by using consolidated tables and will be accompanied by a critical analysis showing trends and lessons learned from the analysis.*

Industry placement:

A key feature of the programmes reviewed is the inclusion of work placement / internship. However, the School is recommended to provide greater clarity around the structures and protocols employed in the design and management of learner placement to ensure consistency. Key points to be addressed include:

- A clear statement of the learning outcomes to be met; these should be agreed with each employer together with a plan on how the placement student will be supported in attaining those learning outcomes.
- Consistency of learning outcomes between options to ensure a similar learning experience for each placement whether Erasmus/in-house/in Ireland
- Review opportunities to better engage learner placements locally and regionally.

- *The School welcomes the recommendations in relation to learner placement. The full range of existing learner placement documents will be attached to and referenced in all future programme documents.*
- *The School's regular engagement with industry placement providers presents suitable opportunities to monitor placement progress and outcomes. These will then be reviewed on an annual basis by the relevant programme boards to ensure that placements are operating at an optimum level for the student, industry and the School of Tourism.*

External Examiners:

External examiners play a critical role in ensuring the consistency and fairness of learner assessment. No commentary or executive summary was provided in the SER documentation on comments and suggestions arising from external examiner reports over the period of review. Such information is captured in the internal Programme Board reports but attention should have been given to providing at least summary evidence and a critique of such important feedback and actions arising within the SER documentation. It is recommended that this work be undertaken.

- *A summary of the External Examiner reports, along with details of any required actions, is provided on a per programme basis in the School's Annual report to the Institute's Academic Council (see School of Tourism Annual Report 2015/2016).*
- *In turn, such reports will form the basis of a review of feedback from External Examiners and will be included in all future SER documentation.*

Student Pathway map:

The School offers a diverse portfolio of programmes with multiple entry-exit points, which caters flexibly for a diverse learner audience. The potential avenues available to a learner are not always obvious. It is recommended that a learner experience map be developed to guide prospective students along the possible avenues available to them and the progression opportunities, further education or career, they can open up. Such a map might also be used in the general promotion of programmes.

- *In conjunction with the relevant Central Services sections (Marketing, Registry, etc.) the School of Tourism will develop a 'learner experience map', which will be used to guide prospective students in terms of progression opportunities.*
- *This will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that the document is as up to date as possible.*

PROGRAMME DOCUMENTATION – RECOMMENDED AMENDMENTS / CLARIFICATIONS

An executive summary of the key findings from the various focus group meetings held as part of the PPE should be provided to demonstrate how these suggestions and findings informed the programme revision process.

- *While feedback from various stakeholder engagement exercises was presented for the Culinary Arts programmes in Part B, pages 29-32 and for Hospitality and Tourism programmes in Part B, pages 235-237, a summary of the findings will be presented in future documents.*

Learning to Learn:

As part of its transitions programme to support learners coming to higher education or mature learners returning to education, the School and Institute provide an accredited 'Learning to Learn' module as part of their programmes. It is recommended that consideration be given to an amended title for this module, which would have a greater positive connotation for interpretation.

- *The programme boards have reviewed the above recommendation and have changed the title of the 'Learning to Learn' module to 'Leading and Research for Higher Education' as this better reflects the focus and purpose of the module.*
- *The programme boards have also accepted the recommendations on minor amendments, clarifications on individual programme modules and will consider them at the first programme board meetings in the 2017/2018 academic year.*

The External Expert Group advises the Academic Council that approval of the programmes subject to general conditions of approval together with the following additional conditions:

No Conditions

List of programmes approved School of Tourism

Certificate in Culinary Skills
 Higher Certificate in Arts in Bar and Restaurant Supervision
 Higher Certificate in Arts in Culinary Arts
 Bachelor of Arts in Culinary Arts
 Bachelor of Science in Culinary Science
 Certificate in Hotel Revenue and Digital Media Management
 Certificate in Marine Tourism and Seafood Fundamentals
 Certificate in Local and Regional Guiding
 Diploma in Restaurant Operations Management
 Bachelor of Arts in Hospitality and Tourism
 Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Destination Tourism Marketing (add-on)
 Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Culinary Arts and Food Technology (add-on)
 Bachelor of Arts (Hons) Hotel, Restaurant & Resort Management (add-on)
 Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Culinary Arts (add-on)
 Higher Diploma in Destination Tourism with Marketing
 Higher Diploma in Food Product Development



Signed: Ken Carroll
 Chair of the PPE External Panel

05 October 2017

Date: