INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY BLANCHARDSTOWN

SCHOOL OF INFORMATICS & ENGINEERING

DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATICS

NEW PROGRAMME VALIDATION REPORT

Master of Arts (MA)
in
Creative Digital Media;
Lens Based Media
(Programme BN542)

Institute of Technology Blanchardstown,

Blanchardstown Road North, Dublin 15,

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Introduction

The Institute of Technology Blanchardstown has the Delegated Authority from the [Quality and Qualifications Ireland](#), to; develop, validate, implement and continuously improve its existing taught higher education and training programmes up to and including programmes in Level 9 of the [National Framework of Qualifications](#).

The purpose of this document is to report on the findings of the Peer Review panel that was established to validate this proposed programme against the criteria for the validation of programmes as stipulated in the Institute Policy Document 2MP01[1].

Programme Overview

The Master of Arts (MA) in Creative Digital Media⎯Lens Based Media programmes is designed to produce highly skilled practitioners, adept in image-making practices using lens-based devices. The programme embraces both still and moving image production skills, as well as incorporating audiovisual content development and emerging digital imaging paradigms. With strong emphases on practice-led research, and orientated towards the artistic, creative and digital media industry, the MA in Lens Based Media is designed to embrace and develop practices in photography, video, audio, and film making, as well as exploration of the interrelationship between such media in the digital age. The programme places equal emphases on the development of practical, critical and creative skills, and accommodates learners with prior experience of Lens Based Media, as well as those who are relatively new to the field.

The structure and delivery methods are intended to facilitate the development of strong industry standard portfolios to serve as evidence of skills, abilities and creativity competencies attained. The project-base and flexible nature of the modules allow learners to craft their portfolios towards specific career paths. Also, the highly multidisciplinary nature of the programme is intended to produce graduates who can operate across the spectrum of contemporary image-making practices; including both commercial and artistic ventures. They will also be in a position to readily engage with the emerging developments in digital technologies. To enable these, it draws on disciplines such as Creative Digital Media, Fine Art, Film & TV, Advertising & Marketing, Critical Theory, Film Studies, Cultural Studies and Philosophy, and the Emerging Technologies in these areas. Substantive employment roles for graduates include; videographer, filmmaker, visual artist, media content producer, commercial photographer, creative director, video editor, documentary maker, and director of photography.

Learners on this MA in Creative Digital Media- Lens Based Media programme, will have the opportunity to take one of two pathways illustrated in Figure 1.

Programme BN542R: 30 ECTS credits of taught modules in each of semesters 1 & 2, with a 30 ECTS credit Research Project in semester 3

Programme BN542M: 30 ECTS credits of taught modules in semester 1 with a 60 ECTS credit Research Project in semesters 2 & 3

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[1] 2MP01 Design, Validation and Accreditation of New Academic Programmes
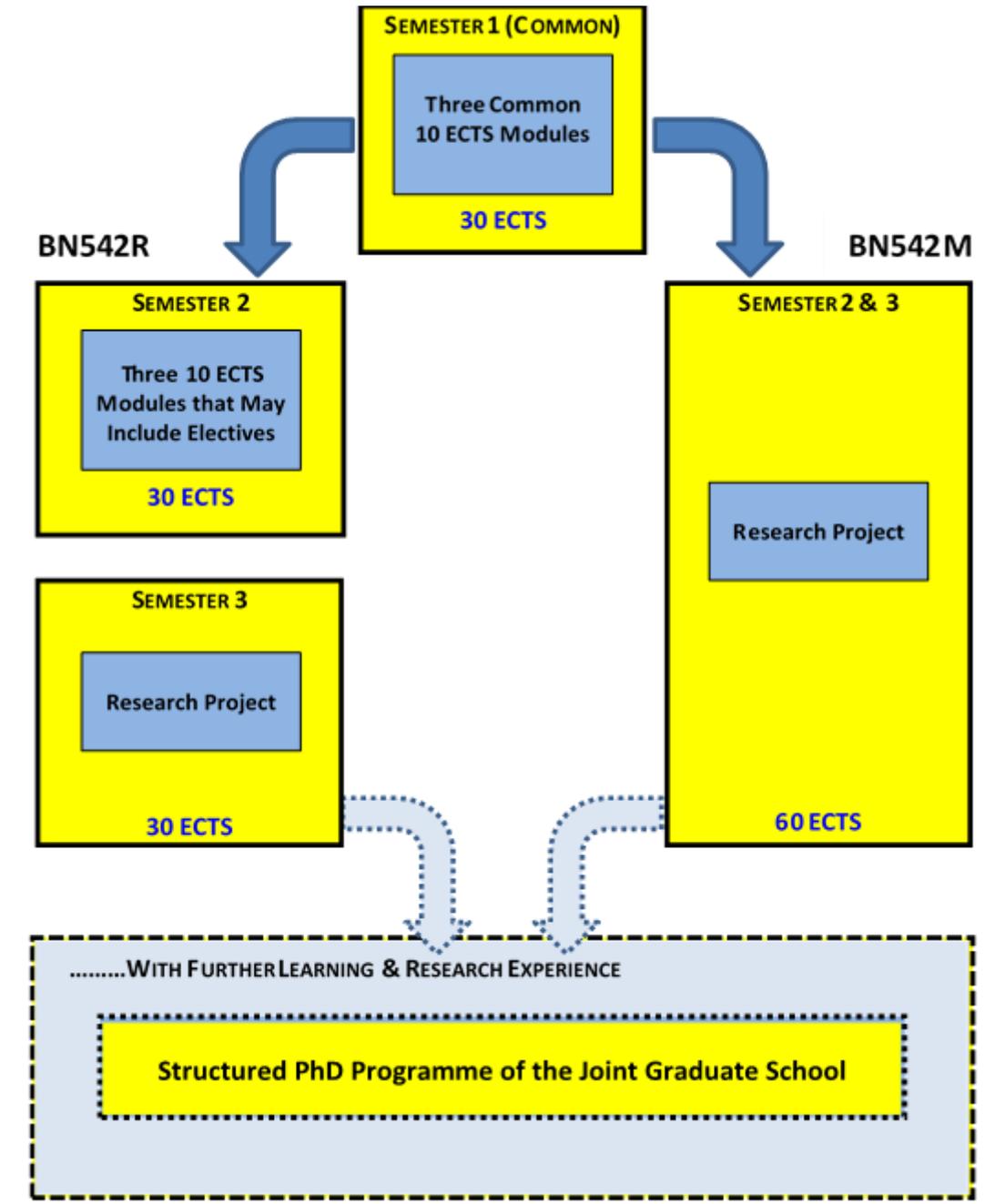
Figure 1 Pathways for the Proposed MA in Creative Digital Media- Lens Based Media

Validation Panel Composition

Chair: Dr Niall Seery
                          Vice President Academic Affairs & Registrar,
                          Athlone Institute of Technology.

Member(s): *Academic Experts*
                          Dr Simon Perkins
                          Faculty of Media & Communication, Bournemouth University, UK.

                          Dr Kylie Jarrett
                          Head of the Department of Media Studies, Faculty of Arts, Maynooth University

                          Nollaig Crombie
                          Head of Department of Design & Creative Media, Letterkenny Institute of
                          Technology

Member(s): *Business/Industry Experts*
                          Robert Coyle, Head of UX at Creme Global, Dublin

                          Catherine Madden, Project Director, UXDX, Dublin

                          Niall O'Hoisin, Noho Ltd. Dublin

In attendance: Dr Larry McNutt, Registrar, IT Blanchardstown (Panel Secretary)

                          Dr Philip Owende, Academic Quality Manager, IT Blanchardstown

Date of Panel Meeting: May 25, 2018.

Consultation

Management Team consulted during the panel meeting:

Dr Anthony Keane	Head of School of Informatics & Engineering
Daniel McSweeney	Head of Department of Informatics

Academic staff contributing to programme development and were consulted during the panel meeting:

Ian Cudmore	Lecturer in Creative Digital Media
Sinead Curran	Lecturer in Creative Digital Media
Siobhan Enright	Lecturer in Creative Digital Media
Hugh McCabe	Lecturer in Informatics and Creative Digital Media
Dr Katherine Nolan	Lecturer in Creative Digital Media
Hugh Rodgers	Lecturer in Creative Digital Media
Nicola Duffy	Lecturer in Creative Digital Media
Shaun Ferns	Lecturer in Informatics and Creative Digital Media
Margaret Kinsella	Lecturer in Informatics and Creative Digital Media
Orla McMahon	Lecturer in Informatics and Creative Digital Media
Niamh O'Hora	Lecturer in Creative Digital Media
Mark Shields	Lecturer in Informatics and Creative Digital Media
Dr Matt Smith	Senior lecturer in Informatics
Robert Smith	Lecturer in Informatics and Creative Digital Media
Paul Stacey	Senior lecturer in Engineering
Dr Helen Williams	Lecturer in Informatics and Creative Digital Media

Validation Panel Findings

In evaluating the appropriateness, quality and proposed operation of this programme the following criteria were considered and are hereby reported upon:

Strategic planning

The panel was satisfied that the programme and the design are in keeping with the Institute's mission, do not constitute redundant provision, and consider efficient deployment of associated resources.

Evidence of consultation

The programme development process sought for and considered inputs from: academic staff involved in the delivery of creative digital media programmes; learner representatives; graduates of the supporting undergraduate programmes; potential employers, business and practitioners, and; technical staff representatives. Through the structured discussions with the management, and the programme design and delivery teams during the validation panel visit, the panel established evidence that comprehensive research/consultation efforts were undertaken with both internal and external stakeholders to validate the rationale and the adopted structure, pathways and characteristics of the proposed programme.

Graduate employment potential

The panel was of the opinion that there are a wide range of career opportunities for graduates, and based on core knowledge and competence outcomes of the proposed programme, such graduates would be of immediate value to industry.

Protection of enrolled learners

Part 6 Section 65(1) of the Act[2] does not apply.

Provisions for quality assurance

The panel was informed of how the programme submission had been proposed, developed and approved internally, in compliance with the Institute's quality assurance policies and procedures. The panel noted that the Institute's policies and procedures for programme development, monitoring and continuous improvement complied with the current national guidelines. The Institute has procedures for the periodic revalidation (normally every five years) of the programmes it validates, and the validation and revalidation reports are published.

Programme title and award title

The panel was satisfied that the title of the proposed programme is clear, accurately reflects the coverage, and therefore will be able to accurately inform prospective learners and other stakeholders. They are consistent with QQI award titles.

Ethics

The panel was satisfied that the Institute has internal policies and procedures in place to ensure appropriate ethical oversight in respect of teaching, learning, and research activity across all programmes in the NFQ levels covered.

Consistency

The panel found that the programme design is consistent with QQI policy on accumulation of credits and certification of subjects, that it has an underlying unifying theme with both implicit and explicit linkage of modules. The panel was contented with expectation in progressive development of the learners' standards of knowledge, skill and competence throughout the individual modules and the integrated programme outcomes.

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[2] Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012

Teaching and learning
The panel discussed with the programme development team the range of interactions used with learners in the course of programmes delivery. Course management arrangements were also discussed and deemed adequate. The panel observed clear evidence of planned interactions with, and comprehensive academic and technical support arrangements for learning. Institutional unique offering is in collaborations with companies offering realistic design problems that show how skill translate to work in the discipline and professional remit of graduates from the programme. The panel pointed out the need to embed more strategic research methodology by emphases on practice-based research (as opposed to practice-led research), and which is more amenable to prioritization and therefore can be more realistically supported.

Learner assessment
Through discussion with the programme design team, the multiple modes of assessment to be employed (both formal and informal) were articulated. The Institute's policy on continuous assessment, based on objective development/enhancement of learners' application of knowledge and critical analysis and problem solving skills within specific timeframes were highlighted. The panel encouraged the consideration of cross-modular assessment events to minimise the volume of assessment across the taught modules.

Standards of knowledge, skill and competence
Having reviewed the syllabi and assessment methods as proposed, the panel was of the opinion that learners would be capable of attaining the standards of knowledge, skill or competence relevant for the award of *Master of Arts (MA) in Creative Digital Media⸺Lens Based Media*.

Access, transfer and progression
The panel confirmed that the programme incorporates well-established procedures for access, transfer and progression. These are provided for per the Institute's Policy *3AD08 Admissions Policy*.

Other salient considerations
In the programme validation process, the panel interacted with Institute management team in the programme-level discussion, and with the programme development team in comprehensive module-level discussions.

The programme level discussion enabled the panel to gain further insight to the proposed programme, and to confirm the strategic relevance and the inherent institutional supports. The timeliness of the proposed programme in the context of Institute's application for Technological University designation (under Dublin Technological University consortium, in partnership with DIT and IT Tallaght), hence, the validation process was discussed in detail with the management team. It was expressed that the proposed programme reflected the ambition and competence that have been developed by the Department of Informatics over the last 10 years.

The module level discussions considered the panel members' observations and queries related to the programme proposal, beginning with a justification of the overarching programme structure. It also covered module-by-module analyses and discussions with the programme team. Some notable points of discussion, included:

(1) Comments related to the link between theory and practice, i.e., academic and industry intent:

- The panel expressed that fine-art practice is the vanguard of experimentation. Therefore, if the programme's intent is to produce graduates who will be different from other commercial agencies, the embedding of creativity and innovation will be key.

- Noted that the Department proposes practice-led approach as a distinguishing factor in course design. However, the panel pointed that practice-led curriculum may be difficult to implement, especially where it is formal. Academic programme leading towards a PhD as stated, makes practice-led difficult

to implement. Therefore, it should be more practice-based programme, i.e., aiming for competency in discipline area as opposed to research *per se*. For this, protocols/guidelines will need to be refined within the quality assurance framework, e.g., provide guidelines for what determines a good thesis. Noted that practice-based provides scope for more strategic handling of content, which will be a key differentiator for programme.

- It was highlighted that, academic rigor in theses should not necessarily demand more work (word count), but rather innovativeness is also required.

(2) It was noted that there is need to show connectedness between modules, i.e., how learning outcomes feed forward within semester and between semesters. There is also need to specify the workload related to the student projects. Discussions also highlighted the importance and relevance of academic portfolio approach for modules.

(3) The programme team highlighted the entrepreneurial aspects to the programme, specifically, in video/documentary preparation. Currently, entrepreneurial programmes offered by the LINC Centre at ITB such as Enterprise Garage provide scope for extending engagement with live clients/projects. Some students have also been linked with the Digital Hub.

(4) The need for a more comprehensive process for transfer of learners to the 60 ECTS programme pathway. It was unclear how the transfer will be managed for Quality Assurance (QA). The panel was categorical that, from a QA perspective, the programme must be crystal-clear of the evidence of the leaners' academic capacity/aptitude to undertake the 60 ECTS project. The object is to protect the learner and not to inadvertently precipitate a contestable situation, especially in situations where a learner fails to meet the requirements of the programme.

Decision of the Panel

The panel recommends validation of the following programmes with Conditions[3]/Recommendations[4]:

Programme title: **Master of Arts in Creative Digital Media (Lens Based Media)**

Programme code: BN542

Award Title: Master of Arts

NFQ level: 9 (90 ECTS credits)

Exit awards: Postgraduate Diploma in Arts in Creative Digital Media (Lens Based Media)
(*BN545 – NFQ level 9 - 60 ECTS credits*)

Minor award: Level 9 Certificate in Creative Digital Media (Lens Based Media)
(BN546 – NFQ level 9 - 30 ECTS credits)

Conditions of Validation

The panel recommended the validation of the Master of Arts in Creative Digital Media (Lens Based Media) subject to the following Conditions:

(1) Provide an explicit outline of the *Quality Assurance Process* that will be applied to determine the candidates' eligibility for the 60 ECTS research weighted pathway. Core transversal research skills must

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[3] A condition is an action, which in the opinion of the validation panel, must be undertaken prior to the commencement of the programme. Conditions are mandatory for programme approval.

[4] A recommendation is a proposed action, which in the opinion of the validation panel, must be given serious consideration.

be embedded in the assessment so that it qualifies as research weighted programme. There should also be adequate provisions for supporting students through the transition to develop capacity for the research.

(2) The noted weaknesses in the description of Learning Outcomes (LOs) should be addressed. Specifically, the module descriptors must show how they measure that LOs have been attained via associated assessment.

(3) To review Learning Outcomes across all modules to ensure they describe module outcomes and not assessment criteria.

(4) Review workload associated with the research modules to ensure that the iterative output process, i.e., the protocol in the processes for the management of the research project are quality assured.

Recommendations

The panel provided the following recommendations:

(1) Since the research projects are to be executed in Semester 3, i.e., over the summer period, the programme should provide appropriate guidelines on supervision arrangements to ensure that student progress will be on schedule. The panel considered that this can be provided for within the Learning Agreements between supervising staff and Human Resources Department, as explained by the programme team.

(2) All modules need to be described in the context of their aims and overall contribution to the practice-based master's connectedness.

(3) The programme team to provide clear distinction between the graduate attributes of the 60 ECTS and 30 ECTS project pathways.

(4) There is need to expound on the entrepreneurial side to the programme, specifically in areas of video/documentary preparation.

Commendations

The panel commended the following aspect of the proposed programme and validation process:

(1) The programme is responding to the market demands for graduate pipeline in the related sector. The unique 60 ECTS research weighted pathway will: offer graduates a significant period to undertake original research projects that will generate publications and/or deliverables that can be exhibited, and; also prepares them for possible doctoral study.

(2) The programme team engaged the panel in informative discussions on the proposed programme.

Validation Report Sign-off

Chair

_____   _____

Dr Niall Seery   Date

Secretary

_____   _____

Dr Larry McNutt   Date