

Validation Report



**Master of Science
in User Experience Design
&
Master of Arts
in User Experience Design**

(MSc of Science programme validated)

Programme Code: DL908

Validation Date: 26th May 2015

Panel members

Chairperson

Dr Joseph Ryan
Registrar
Athlone Institute of Technology
Co Westmeath

Panel member 1

Dr Brian Nolan
Head of School of Informatics & Engineering
Blanchardstown Institute of Technology
Dublin

Panel member 2

Dr John Gilligan
School of Computing
Dublin Institute of Technology
Dublin

Panel member 3

Ms Rosie Martin
Design Team Lead
IBM
Dublin

IADT

Dr Annie Doona, President, IADT
Dr Marian O'Sullivan, Registrar, IADT
Dr Andrew Power, Head of Faculty of Film, Art &
Creative Technologies
Dr Marion Palmer, Head of Department of Technology
and Psychology
Mr John Dempsey, Lecturer, Department of
Technology and Psychology
Programme Team

Panel meeting with President and Head of Faculty

The President, Dr Annie Doona outlined the Institute's strategy in the context of recent changes in higher education and how the proposal fits into the objectives going forward. IADT's position in this new landscape is augmented by its portfolio of programmes, integrating the key domains of the arts, design, film, digital media, entrepreneurship, technology and applied psychology. These cross disciplinary activities in the creative and cultural sector represent the unique vision and mission of IADT.

The Institute takes in a high percentage of mature students each year and students with specific learning needs. Good support is available to 1st year entrants with the First Year Matters project running for several weeks at the commencement of the academic year, facilitated by staff and current students. The Institute has robust recognition of prior learning procedures, outlined in a policy document that is available on the IADT website. The Head of the Department of Technology and Psychology is on the board of the National Forum for Teaching and Learning.

The Head of Faculty Dr Andrew Power outlined the background to developing the programme. The proposal was developed out of the undergraduate streams of technology and psychology programmes in response to queries of interest and demand from students and industry. The faculty has solid experience of teaching at level 9, with four taught masters and 16 research masters currently registered. 40% of faculty staff have level 10 qualifications.

Panel meeting with Programme Team

Title of programme

The panel were concerned that the use of the titles MSc and MA may cause confusion for applicants, particularly the MA aspect. The term 'design' denotes association with the visual arts, an element which this programme does not offer. It was suggested the term 'design' be removed from the MA proposal to make the programme profile more precise for applicants. The word 'design' has different meanings for design and engineering professionals.

Pathways

The programme team outlined the rationale for the development of the two awards. There is already collaboration at IADT and the disciplines of design and technology overlap on several programmes. Students decide which pathway they will follow at the beginning, but will work together across streams, specialising in their final project on the design aspect or the technical aspect. The disciplines fall between the QQI designated award standards. IADT's aspiration is to push the boundaries with this proposal, and attract a diverse profile of applicants onto the programme.

The break even minimum intake is 10-11 students, with a target intake of low 20's. With this in mind, the panel recommended the candidate profile in the document should be more explicit.

The panel noted that graduates from both streams would be expected to have all the core skills and knowledge associated with design and engineering concepts. For the latter, an understanding of the fundamentals (not specifically coding) would be required. Graduates should be proficient in all practical aspects of UX design, for example universal design, responsive and adaptive design, native and web applications, human computer interface principles and design guidelines. Taking this into consideration, it was difficult to see the rationale for the two awards from an employer point of view. For applicants with a technical background applying for the MA proposal, and applicants from a design background applying for the MSc proposal, the panel queried whether such applicants would have adequate skills to progress through the programme. The panel were of the opinion that the modules were more tailored towards an MSc award.

Platform

The platform aspect is not clear in the document. What are the team designing for – for example, mobile or web?

The intention of the team was to design for both, and to look at appropriate design methodologies.

Portfolio

The importance of completing a portfolio of work that graduates could show to potential employers was stressed.

The team confirmed that students will develop a body of work which might include html pages, Photoshop mock ups and wire frames.

Assessment

There is summative assessment at the end of each module, and formative assessment as the work progresses. Assessments are planned as a team. Briefs are drafted and passed by external examiners. At the start of the year students are given assignment briefs with dates and criteria set out. The information also goes into the annual programme handbook.

The intention was the assessment of the final project on the MA or MSc would be different and this was the primary difference between the two awards. Student on the MSc would be expected to do more rigorous testing and student on the MA would be expected to do more innovative design.

In the first year, students get an opportunity to do group work in three project modules, working in teams and also submitting individual work. The team have experience of managing outcomes of assessment criteria. The workload in 1st year in particular is monitored closely.

Work commences in 1st year, and students are encouraged to be engaged from the outset. It is planned to integrate an industry based project into assessment. The ideal is a group based project, with 1 – 3 people. Students can bring in a case study they get from a company or a sample of professional practice. The faculty has an ethics protocol to cover all projects.

Entry requirements

The entry requirements for the programme didn't specify enough detail on what students would be expected to know before commencing on the programme. This should be clarified in the document.

Modules

The module titles were reviewed.

The meeting concluded.

Decision of the panel

The panel recommended the validation of the MSc in User Design Experience only.

Code	Description	Credits
DLTBC	Master of Science in User Experience Design	90
Validation Date		Tuesday 26 th May 2015

Conditions

No conditions

Recommendations

The panel made the following series of recommendations for the consideration of the programme team:

1. The panel recommend the profile of potential students for the programme be made more explicit in the document.
2. The entry requirements need to be clarified in the document.
3. The panel recommend the inclusion of an exit award at postgraduate level, with its own explicit learning outcomes.
4. Group assessment work needs more detail in the document. The project based learning needs a lot of work; think about discourse, and build carefully for a diverse cohort.
5. Consider revising the document to ensure the design aspect is not lost.
6. Review the title and content of the UX Design Issues module to give it more of an engineering focus.
7. Include universal design principles in the document.
8. A range of indicative projects would be helpful.
9. Include reference to existing design philosophy.
10. Problem solving – look at learning outcomes along whole area of critical thinking.
11. Project – give some thought to the final product, which could be shaped into a portfolio to give to employers.
12. Include the option of full time and part time delivery in the document.
13. Given that the recommendation is to award an MSc then those aspects of the document which refer to the MA, especially in the discussion on the learning outcomes for the research project (pages 12 and 13), should be removed or merged into the MSc requirements.
14. A preamble which describes the kind of projects and focus of work and the domains of application likely to be undertaken in this programme needs to be included in the introduction to the course document.
15. The proposal needs to be revised to include a new section early on as a kind of executive summary outlining the context in which the Msc is needed. This could address the diversity of the incoming student cohort and the multiple constituencies that the masters programme will be aimed at.
16. This context should make explicit what the student will design for. Is it a web site, a user experience, a mobile app, a physical product, a customer experience taken in the round.
17. The profile of the incoming student needs to be well defined. The profile of the graduate student exiting with this MSc needs to be made explicit.

Commendations

The panel commended the team on the quality and clarity of the programme document.

In summing up, on behalf of the panel the Chair thanked the President of IADT and the programme team for the quality of engagement during the process, and extended the panel's high regard for the team's vision for the programme which came across in the discussion.

The Panel were happy to recommend the programme – MSc in User Experience Design - to the Academic Council of IADT, taking into consideration the recommendations outlined above.

Panel signatures

Chairperson

Dr Joseph Ryan _____ Date _____

Registrar

Dr Marian O'Sullivan _____ Date _____

Master of Science in User Experience Design

Programme Team's Response to the Panel Report

October 2015

The programme team thanks the panel for the report and the validation of the programme and the commendation about the quality of the documents.

The programme document has been revised and submitted and the team's response to the recommendations is below.

Recommendations	Response from the programme team
1. The panel recommend the profile of potential students for the programme be made more explicit in the document.	Sections A3.1 and B5 have been strengthened to make this more explicit.
2. The entry requirements need to be clarified in the document.	Section B1.1 details the entry requirements clearly.
3. The panel recommend the inclusion of an exit award at postgraduate level, with its own explicit learning outcomes.	No exit award included. It was not considered appropriate as the impact would be considerable on the MSc.
4. Group assessment work needs more detail in the document. The project based learning needs a lot of work; think about discourse, and build carefully for a diverse cohort.	This detail and support is considered more appropriate for the student programme handbook and has been included there. It will be developed
5. Consider revising the document to ensure the design aspect is not lost.	The document has been revised to strengthen the design aspect. The design aspect of the final research project has been strengthened through developing appropriate learning outcomes.
6. Review the title and content of the UX Design Issues module to give it more of an engineering focus.	The module has been retitled UX Design Engineering to meet this recommendation.

7. Include universal design principles in the document.	Universal design principles are included from the beginning in the Fundamentals of UX Design and Design Thinking modules.
8. A range of indicative projects would be helpful.	An indicative project has been included in each of the project modules.
9. Include reference to existing design philosophy.	Exploring existing design philosophies is fundamental to the programme and part of each module.
10. Problem solving – look at learning outcomes along whole area of critical thinking.	Critical thinking tutorials are a key element of the teaching and learning strategy. Critical thinking is part of the learning outcomes for the Design Thinking and Interaction Design modules.
11. Project – give some thought to the final product, which could be shaped into a portfolio to give to employers.	The programme will use a portfolio app Throughout students will leave with a portfolio of work including the final research project. This detail will be in the programme handbook.
12. Include the option of full time and part time delivery in the document.	This has not been included as the full time option cannot be resourced.
13. Given that the recommendation is to award an MSc then those aspects of the document which refer to the MA, especially in the discussion on the learning outcomes for the research project (pages 12 and 13), should be removed or merged into the MSc requirements.	These references have been removed.

14. A preamble which describes the kind of projects and focus of work and the domains of application likely to be undertaken in this programme needs to be included in the introduction to the course document.	The introduction has been extended to include a description of the type of project work that the students on the programme will complete.
15. The proposal needs to be revised to include a new section early on as a kind of executive summary outlining the context in which the Msc is needed. This could address the diversity of the incoming student cohort and the multiple constituencies that the masters programme will be aimed at.	This is part of Section A the rationale for the programme.
16. This context should make explicit what the student will design for. Is it a web site, a user experience, a mobile app, a physical product, a customer experience taken in the round.	The students will design for all platforms at different stages in the programme. This is clear in the module descriptors.
17. The profile of the incoming student needs to be well defined. The profile of the graduate student exiting with this MSc needs to be made explicit.	Sections B1 and B2 have been extended to include a profile of incoming and graduate students respectively.

John Dempsey
 Programme Coordinator
 Psychology
 MSc in User Experience Design
 22 October 2015

Dr Marion Palmer
 Head of Department of Technology and