



**Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology
Certificate in Applied Digital Business**

**External Panel Validation
22nd June 2017**

Panel Members:

Chair:

Ms Margaret Fitzsimons

Head of School Accounting & Finance

Dublin Institute of Technology

Academic Expert:

Mr Alan Morgan

Lecturer, Marketing Department/Editor in Chief DBS Business Review

Dublin Business School

Industry Expert:

Ms Aileen Eglington

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IADT/:

Dr Andrew Power, Registrar

Dr Josephine Browne, Head of Enterprise & Humanities

Dr Therese Moylan, Head of Department of Entrepreneurship

Programme Team:

Ms Audrey Stenson, Lecturer, Department of Entrepreneurship

Mr Peter Weadack, Lecturer, Department of Entrepreneurship

Dr Christine Horn, Lecturer, Department of Entrepreneurship

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1. Introduction

IADT is an Institute of Technology established under the Institutes of Technology Act (1992 – 2006). IADT has delegated authority to make awards at level 7, 8 and 9 – the latter for both taught and research programmes.

The proposed programme is a 1 year offering consisting of two 15 credit modules and will be completed within one academic year. With a focus on practical application, students will be introduced to an array of digital tools and learn to develop a website to improve a company's online profile, and promote their business via a web marketing strategy.

The following report is a review from the external validation panel. Over the course of the day, the panel were given a tour of the space resources and technical facilities available to students at IADT.

2. Private meeting of panel

The Panel held private discussions to identify key issues for discussion with the senior management and the programme team, including:

- Digital strategy and Business Design
- Student cohort
- Assessment format – 3 case studies
- Learning resources and reading lists

3. Meeting with IADT Management

The Panel met with senior IADT management to discuss overarching issues relating to the delivery of the programme (staffing, facilities) and how the proposal fits within the IADT strategy. Core objectives of the strategy include a focus on industry and employability, collaborations and a partnership approach.

All programme proposals are subjected to a rigorous internal quality assurance process, as outlined in the IADT Procedure for the Development and Approval of New Programmes (available on the Institute website). All Institute quality assurance processes are informed by the policies and procedures criteria set out by Quality and Qualifications Ireland.

There is a growing awareness of the importance of the digital landscape for both self-employment, new venture creation and for business development. This is supported by very recent publications from both the EU and Ireland.

This proposal addresses a skills gap in the economy for the target cohort - the economically inactive and the unemployed. It is a Springboard/labour market activation response and is designed to equip students who are re-entering the labour market after an extended absence with a skill set that is relevant and up to date. Another potential market is local SMEs, working to upskill employees, and the team will develop a strategic focus for this in the coming year. The programme would also be relevant for entrepreneurs who wish to upskill or move between businesses.

4. Meeting with the Programme Team

The team carried out an analysis of the sector, and concluded there was a lack of emphasis on applied learning in programmes offered elsewhere. Students returning to the workplace after extended absences will require an instruction based level of teaching. This informed the design of this proposal, a format with no academic writing.

Students graduate with a portfolio of work and a set of transferable skills. Workshops will be run on finding employment and the established close links with industry will provide an opportunity for students to identify with local businesses in the context of setting up their own business.

The repeat mechanism available to student is 100% project based, which may be completed in the summer or the autumn. Students will be supported in this endeavor via VLE, e.g. Blackboard.

Developing a website:

The applied aspect to learning is also the reason why 3 case studies are at the core of the programme, with an emphasis on:

- Technology - first students learn to develop a website.
- Digital Storytelling - secondly students develop a mixture of technology and design to build and design a website and identify any gaps and requirements based on lessons from previous case study.
- Design and Web Building - continued work on a mixture of technology and design, and building a website based on a more advanced case study problems, again incorporating lessons learned from the previous case studies.

Marketing Strategy:

Students learn how to promote their business using social media and developing a digital market strategy. Students are encouraged to build a professional persona online and participate in an online discussion. This provides an opportunity for students to observe their peers and learn how to add value to the online discussion. Guidelines for the community are set for the different social media channels used, with LinkedIn used more for professional purposes as opposed to Facebook. The first topic of discussion is online consumer behavior with no assessment for two months.

5. Findings and Recommendations of the Panel

The Panel recommends approval of the level 8 Certificate in Applied Digital Business (30 credits)

Conditions

There were no conditions attached to the validation of the programme.

Recommendations

1. The Panel recommends the team consider using the 3 case studies to show evidence of the building blocks applied when students develop a website. First the initial web design, then ensuring it is mobile compatible and finally enhanced by an app. This module could then be linked to the Marketing module by students using their website to brand the work they have done. This integrated marketing strategy would strengthen connections with industry by linking the 3 areas of assessment to an actual live business.
2. The Panel recommends the team ensure that responsible behavior and etiquette is incorporated into the rules around the online discussion. A culture of Business language should be encouraged among forum participants.
3. The Panel suggests the team consider encouraging students to build a Brand Me profile, which would be of benefit in learning how to develop a professional, industry standard online profile.
4. The Panel recommends the inclusion of the research documentation in the programme document, detailing discussion and engagement with industry prior to the development of the postgraduate programme.
5. The Panel suggests the inclusion of a Digital Marketing strategy, with a mapping of the consumer journey and an outline of the consumer decision making process.
6. The Panel recommends the team consider a third category as a potential student cohort – the area of micro business. This could be an upskilling for a defined cohort in an area which has been identified as having a weakness in the digital marketing landscape.
7. Remove the typing error on page 20; the reference to Bachelor of Business.

Commendations

The Chair thanked the team for their engagement with the validation process, noting the proposal is a welcome response to a skills gap in the economy and wished the team well in the future.