

ULSTER UNIVERSITY

REPORT OF A MEETING OF THE EVALUATION OF THE CERTIFICATE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN TOUR GUIDING AT BELFAST METROPOLITAN COLLEGE, TITANIC QUARTER CAMPUS.

11 October 2017

PRESENT: Dr Michaela Keenan, Associate Dean (Education), Faculty of Computing, Engineering and the Build Environment, Ulster University [Chair]
Professor Eugenia Wickens, Course Leader - MSc Tourism Development and Management, Bucks New University
Ms Carolyn Boyd, Industry Development Manager, Tourism NI
Professor Una McMahon-Beattie, Head of Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Ulster University
Mrs Pauline Douglas, Senior Lecturer, School of Biomedical Sciences, Ulster University

In attendance: Ms Carol Reid, Subject Partnership Manager, Ulster University Business School, Ulster University
Ms Debbie Troy, Academic Policy and Standards Officer, Academic Office

Dr Nic Matthews, Head of Department of Tourism, Hospitality and Events Management, Cardiff Metropolitan University was unable to attend due a flight cancellation on the morning of the meeting, however, had already provided preliminary comments.

1 BACKGROUND/INTRODUCTION

The panel was convened to consider the Certificate of Higher Education in Tour Guiding at Belfast Metropolitan College (Belfast Met). The course will be delivered part-time, over three semesters (one and a half years), and comprises six compulsory 20 credit point modules at level 4. Students undertake two modules per 16-week teaching semester and will be required to attend college one full day per week.

It is proposed that the first intake will be January 2018, with subsequent intakes reverting to September of each year.

The proposed new course is the first level 4 course in Tour Guiding to be offered in Northern Ireland. Belfast Met currently offers certificated courses at levels 2 and 3 in this area. It is proposed that the course will offer professional development for members of Tour Guides NI (with whom Belfast Met has collaborated in designing the course) as well as others seeking to work in this area, in order to address an identified shortage of professionally trained tour guides at this level.

2 DOCUMENTATION

The Panel received the following documentation:

1. Course submission;
2. Guidelines for Revalidation Panels;
3. QAA subject benchmark statement for Events, Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism (2016);
4. Statement from the Subject Partnership Manager;

5. Preliminary comments from Panel members;
6. Reports from central University departments on Library and IT resource matters.

Prior to the meeting, the Panel undertook a tour of facilities at the Titanic campus, following which they heard a short presentation on the facilities at the Castlereagh campus, in particular the proposed mock-up cabin which would be used for the practical aspects of the course.

3 MEETING WITH SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM

3.1 Background and Rationale

The Panel asked the Senior Team to outline how this programme fitted in with existing provision. They were provided with some background on the College's curriculum strategy which was underpinned by four 'Rs' – reputation, relevancy, responsiveness and reach. This course met each of these four pillars – it was a quality course which was fit for purpose and met industry need. In terms of reach, this related to how the College engaged with learners in different ways and from different backgrounds.

Currently there was no provision in this area at level 4 and this course would build on the reputation of courses offered by the College at levels 2 and 3. Tourism was extremely important to the Northern Ireland economy and this course fitted in with that strategy. Belfast Met already offered three high performing foundation degrees in related areas - International Travel and Tourism Management, International Hospitality Management, and Event Management. Strong industry links already existed through the levels 2 and 3 Tour Guiding courses but an accredited course at level 4 was both required and requested by those working in this area. The Blue Badge course, which many tour guides undertook, was not an accredited course nor was it at this level. The College would aspire to become a Centre of Excellence in the sector in this unique specialism relating to aviation, tour guiding and tourism.

There were currently insufficient qualified tour guides in the region and the College had worked with Tour Guides NI and other professional bodies including Tourism NI, in developing this course to meet demand. There were some 80 prospective applicants already waiting for an opportunity to gain a higher level accredited qualification. This met with the College's very strong ethos in meeting industry need and there was very clearly a gap in the market for a course like this.

3.2 Resources

Staff resources

The Panel asked the Senior Team to provide some clarification on the adequacy of the number of staff who would be teaching on this course and if they would also be teaching on the current level 2 and 3 courses. The Senior Team provided assurance that there was a sufficient number of staff to deliver this course. The team currently comprised two full-time and three associate lecturers (0.75, 0.66 and 0.5 FTE). A recruitment process for additional part-time staff was already started which would enrich the existing teaching team by providing expertise in specific areas such as film industry tour guiding. One full-time member of staff had been released from other FE/HE duties to be 100% tour guiding; another was already teaching on foundation degrees and had considerable experience in teaching at HE level in areas which were very much inter-related.

The Panel noted that there would be challenges in having the proposed January 2018 intake and asked how the three semesters of the course would operate, given that a new cohort would start in September 2018. The Senior Team advised that the course would be delivered over three sixteen-week semesters with the first intake proposed the end of January 2018.

Students would be on-campus (Titanic or Castlereagh) one day per week. The Senior Team provided clarification that the course was of one and a half year's duration and not one year, with semester three running over the summer. The September 2018 intake would be a distinct cohort and it was not envisaged that the two first year intakes would be joined together.

The Panel noted that the document included a statement around the flexibility of the three themed modules but following clarification from the Team it was clear that the sequencing of the modules was set. This, therefore, needed to be removed from the document (p 37) and made clear that the ordering of module delivery was not flexible at this time.

The Senior Team confirmed that they were ready for a January intake in terms of staffing and rooms and timetables were already prepared. The new Course Director was being mentored by other very experienced staff in respect of teaching at HE level. The College also provided a workshop for new course directors as well as any ongoing support requirements.

Physical Resources

In response to the request for a one-off January 2018 first intake, the Panel sought assurance that all resources would be in place in readiness for the dual intakes in the first year and that the requirement for students having to attend both the Titanic and Castlereagh campuses would be made clear. Having already provided assurance in terms of staffing, the Senior Team advised the Panel that they had decided on a two-campus location for this course for a number of reasons. The resources at the Titanic campus in respect of library, IT and HE ethic as well as the excellent resources around the Titanic location for students which complemented the course, including the Titanic building and the Nomadic, were deemed the best to provide an enhanced and enriched learning experience. The Castlereagh campus was the location for the new mock-up aircraft cabin, a resource which would also be used by aviation students studying on that site. This proposed facility would provide students with a real life scenario in which to develop their skills and build confidence. It was the intention to install a PA system, video playback as well as a rolling video loop on the cabin walls to give a real life simulation of a moving vehicle for students to deliver tour commentaries. Overall, both campuses provided excellent resources for students. It was envisaged that the majority of tour guides would be mature students and free car parking was available at the Castlereagh campus. The Senior Team provided assurance that the two-campus delivery would be made clear to students on application as well as during the pre-entry guidance sessions and in published course literature.

The Panel enquired if staff had experience of split site delivery and was advised that the College was multiple site and many staff would indeed have experience of having to teach across different campuses.

It was noted that the cabin installation was not yet started at Castlereagh campus but preparations and tenders for provision of services were well advanced. The Senior Team advised the Panel that they hoped it would complete by the end of January 2018 although it may be as late as March 2018. The Senior Team noted that students in a January 2018 intake would not need to use it until five weeks into the course (end of February). The Senior Team was unable to provide a definitive date by which this facility would be ready for use by students and the Panel was concerned that if its completion did run into February that staff would not have any time to assimilate themselves with its functionality. The Senior Team advised that there would always be a back-up in that a room could be set up with rows of chairs.

Other courses would also make use of the cabin facility and the Panel asked if there would be any challenges in relation to timetabling but was advised that no issues were foreseen, given that courses would be timetabled on different days and they were confident that the resource could accommodate both aviation and tour guide courses.

The Senior Team advised the Panel that the College held monthly meetings at which any resource issues would be raised and actioned, as required, so any general issues which may arise would be quickly identified and addressed on an ongoing basis.

3.3 APEL

The Panel enquired how APEL would be applied for this programme and was advised that the College had very clear policy and procedures in this area and to which students seeking APEL would be signposted. All applications for APEL would be reviewed internally before being forwarded to Ulster consideration and final approval.

The Panel sought clarification on what APEL would be used for, for example, for entry, exemption or experience. The Senior Team confirmed that APEL would be used for entry only. Entry requirements for this course were set at 72 tariff points plus GCSE English and Mathematics. It was not anticipated that APEL would be used for exemption but only mapped for entry.

3.4 Staff/Professional Development

The Senior Team was asked to outline how staff were provided with opportunities for their own professional development. Strategically, the College had a long established Staff Development Programme and opportunities existed for staff to undertake additional training including that around technology enhanced learning. The Staff Development programme was flexible in terms of timing to allow all staff to participate around their teaching timetable. Contractually, all staff were required to undertake a minimum of 36 hours staff development per year but many staff also availed of Ulster events and others through their own individual professional bodies. Within this programme, 45 hours had been set aside outside of teaching between now and December to allow staff to meet with industry in advance of the first intake.

3.5 Student Profile

The Panel asked the Team to describe a typical student on this course but was advised that a typical student did not exist. They envisaged that students would come from a wide variety of backgrounds in terms of previous education and training with some having higher education and others without, as well as a very broad age range. The Panel noted the challenges that such a cohort with very differing expectations would bring. The Team advised that, as a base, all applicants must first meet the entry criteria. Peer assessment would enhance the programme as well as the experience that each student would bring to the course. Student feedback was gathered throughout every course, via student surveys, staff/student consultations as well meetings with class representatives and teaching observations. The student body had a very strong voice and the Team was very cognisant of the student profile and in ensuring that every student's needs and expectations were met.

In relation to diversity and making reasonable adjustments for disabled students, the Senior Team provided the Panel with details of the College's process for meeting needs and developing support packages for individual students for the duration of their time at the College.

3.6 Student Experience

In relation to the student experience, the Panel enquired if there were any hidden, additional costs for students undertaking this course. The Senior Team advised that they were obliged under the CMA to highlight any additional costs at the outset and if these existed, they would be made clear at the pre-entry guidance sessions. It was noted, however, that any costs for

hire of coaches, for example, for this course would be built into the course fee so no additional course costs would be incurred.

4 MEETING WITH COURSE TEAM

4.1 Articulation

The Panel asked the Course Team to outline what articulation opportunities were available for students following completion of this course. The Course Team advised that articulation from this level 4 course could be to one of their own three foundation degrees in related areas - International Travel and Tourism Management, International Hospitality Management or Event Management. Students may also be eligible to apply to other courses at Ulster.

4.2 Student Journey

The Panel asked the Course Team to describe what it envisaged a student's journey to be in relation to timetabling and travel between two campuses. The Course Team advised that the first semester would begin with four weeks theory in the *Professional and Research Skills for Tour Guiding* module at Titanic, week 5 practical at Castlereagh for an opportunity to apply the theory, after which students would return to Titanic campus. This pattern would continue with alternative weeks at Castlereagh. Students would receive induction at both campuses alongside campus tours. From experience, the Team advised that the balance between theory and practical normally worked well. It was noted that students on this course would attend on a Tuesday of each week.

The Course Team presented the Panel with a Delivery and Assessment Schedule. The Panel noted that this did not align with the module descriptions and the terminology in relation to lectures, practicals and tutorials was used differently and inconsistently in different modules. The Course Team provided clarification in respect of the difference between lectures, seminars and tutorials with lectures being direct contact with students and seminars were sessions where students used case studies and delivered presentations. At Belfast Met, however, the term tutorial referred to a student's personal tutorial which was timetabled for one hour per week and which differed from its meaning at Ulster. Group and individual tutorials, as per the Ulster terminology, were built into each module with three hours and four hours per week in a theory or practical module respectively.

In relation to practicals and seminars, the Panel advised that the Team needed to be clear as to the difference between the two and that each was used in the intended context. The Team acknowledged that the document perhaps needed to better reflect the industrial practice and practical aspects of the course in the module descriptions.

The Team advised the Panel that there were two pieces of coursework in each module. They acknowledged the application of research skills in a higher education award and advised that the documentation available in the industry bodies would be used for students to develop these skills. Structuring of academically grounded tour commentaries and referencing conventions were also of key importance.

When asked why it was proposed to deliver the course over 16 weeks teaching rather than the University's standard 15 week semester (12 weeks teaching/3 week exam period), the Team advised that the additional weeks were required for the practical modules where students would be out on a moving coach as part of their assessment. This would begin on a city basis, then regional and finally province-wide/cross-border. A normal student day would be three hours in both the morning and afternoon. The Panel pointed out that part of what the Team was describing related to assessment and not teaching time and that the hours stated in the module descriptions would be required to be reviewed to ensure accuracy. The use of

16 weeks teaching per semester rather than the standard should also be taken into consideration.

4.3 Learning and Teaching Strategy

The Panel asked why these particular modules had been developed for this programme, the reason for an even split of 60/60 credit points between theoretical and practical modules, and how everything fitted together into a coherent programme. The Course Team stated that it was important for the research module to be delivered first, with a practical running alongside in semester 1. The semester 2 *History, Coast and Country* module was designed to build knowledge and apply research skills, with semester 3 delivering the final theory module *Current and Entrepreneurial Aspects of Tour Guiding*.

Each module was purposefully developed for the student to build on their knowledge and skills as they moved through the course and to embed theory into practical. In terms of the assessment strategy for the overall programme, the Team advised that this reflected the requirements of HE standards and guidelines and the assessments used were at the requisite level. Assessments were developed to be innovative, creative, valid and fair, alongside the robust and rigorous processes in place to ensure that students would meet the intended learning outcomes at level 4. Established tour guides and other industry bodies had been consulted during the development of the course and module content. It was envisaged that once the programme commenced, that guest speakers would be invited to the College and this would enrich the student experience. The Course Team also stated that they aspired to be a Centre of Excellence in the field.

4.4 Group Work

Group work was utilised in assessments and the Panel noted the challenges of this for part-time students. Inconsistencies were also noted in the application of the policy on group work in that a minimum of 25% should be based in individual contribution for modules contributing to the final award. This must be explicit in all cases where it applied.

4.5 Course Structure

The Panel asked why the course was equally split 60/60 theory and practice and why not 80/40%. The Course Team was of the view that this provided the perfect blend and that the 60 credit points of practical enhanced employability and students would be able to 'hit the ground running'. In developing the programme, the Team had wanted to ensure that the theory was covered but also that the softer skills were embedded and developed through the three practical modules.

The Panel stated that this was an academic programme so consideration should be given to having 40 credit points of practical with 80 credit points of more theoretically informed content. They also asked the Team if they were satisfied that they could deliver the theory in only three 20 credit point modules? The Team assured the Panel that they could but indicated that they could alter the schedule to accommodate further theoretical modules. The team added that during the delivery of the practical modules, students were required to demonstrate theory and were constantly building on their knowledge and skills. Furthermore, the view of employers was that the practical elements needed to be thoroughly embedded in a substantial part of the course.

The Panel enquired how a student would be able to build their knowledge base and a discrete body of knowledge, in particular someone with baseline qualifications on entry, and on which they could draw in the practical modules. The Team advised the Panel that the challenges for students and the building of this knowledge could be found in the assessments in the three

theory modules. The Panel reiterated the importance of adequate coverage of the underpinning theory and the challenges ensuring that this was adequately covered in only three modules. The Team stated that this was one of the reasons for starting the course with the *Professional and Research Skills* module in order to encourage independent learning and develop research and academic skills from the outset. The concerns of the Panel in terms of developing the fundamental knowledge base remained – these related to four main areas – professional and research skills, history and recent events, factors around sustainability, landscape and history, and appreciation of how entrepreneurship could actively be applied. The evidence of four clear areas demonstrated that it might be more appropriate for the programme to be structured around four 20 credit point theory modules and two 20 credit point practical modules which would provide for a much more balanced and rounded programme. Some members of the Course Team were of the view that they would not have confidence in the course if it did not have the three practical modules. The Panel pointed out, however, that there was no difference between these three modules except for the aspect of scale (city/region/province-wide), a view which differed to that of the Course Team. Tourism was a complicated and dynamic area and it was extremely important that students were aware of this. Additional theoretical content would raise awareness.

4.6 Modules

Many of the modules in the original course document had not included reading lists. The Panel was provided with a copy of module descriptions with reading lists attached, however, it appeared that other changes had also been made. Neither the Panel nor the Academic Office had the opportunity to consider or review these in advance of the meeting. The following initial points were noted by the Panel but all modules were required to undergo a complete review.

Professional and Research Skills for Tour Guiding

- Only those staff who would be responsible for delivery of the module should be included.
- The Hours listed had been changed from the original document, however, required to be revisited as these were still incorrect.
- Assessment – it was clarified that coursework 1 comprised two pieces of assessment. The Panel stated that this should be split, with more details provided including percentage weightings for each clearly stated.

History, Coast and Country

Assessment – clarification was provided in that coursework 2 was unseen and the Panel was of the view that it appeared to describe a written examination or at least a class test, although a 50% weighting for a class test appeared excessive.

The reading list was very history orientated and required to be extended and updated.

Cultural awareness and knowledge of markets and market demand was required to be built in across all modules.

Current and Entrepreneurial Aspects of Tour Guiding

The Panel asked the Course Team to explain their understanding of ‘entrepreneurship’ as the module did not appear to cover this aspect. The Course Team advised that tour guides were primarily self-employed and were required to corner a niche in the market and be creative in their approach. Following discussion, it was recommended that consideration be given to re-titling this module and replace ‘entrepreneurial’ with ‘creative’ or ‘innovative’ as this better

reflected what the module covered as there appeared to be no content around entrepreneurial background theory.

Tour Guiding Practice 1, 2 and 3

The three practical modules were considered together by the Panel as the narrative for each was identical and the only differentiating factor was the scale of the practical exercise. The Panel noted that these three modules constituted half of the entire programme although the Course Team felt that the practical elements warranted this 60% credit weighting and discussion took place in this regard. The Panel, however, could not see any clear evidence of academic content.

General Points for all modules

- Hours in each module need to be reviewed with lectures, seminars, practicals, tutorials etc stated as appropriate, and with consistent terminology used across all modules.
- Assessments to be reviewed for all modules to include more details, percentage weightings, length of presentations and typical word counts in order to clearly demonstrate both parity of assessment across modules and what a student is required to do.
- Development of digital skills/use of digital technology was not explicit in the module content and this needed to be expanded upon and clearly indicated as to where it was being done, as well as how these skills were being developed and assessed.

The detail of other module revisions would be set out in the revised Academic Office Appendix.

Following discussions of the module content and programme structure, the Panel recommended that each module be extensively reviewed taking account of comments. Furthermore, the programme structure should be revised to include four, 20 credit point theory modules and 40 credit points of practical rather than the current 60. The Panel also advised that entrepreneurship, cultural awareness as well as customers and markets should be incorporated into module content but it would be the Course Team's decision as to where and how.

In respect of research activity, the Panel noted the opportunities which existed for the Course Team going forward in respect of producing their own new data from the work that they had or would undertake in this area.

5 CONCLUSIONS

The Chair noted the poor quality of the paperwork which had been submitted, including the lack of reading lists, as well as the fact that updated module descriptions only provided to the Panel on the day, had many other additional revisions which the Panel had not had the opportunity to scrutinise.

The Panel commended the following:

- i) The enthusiasm and knowledge of the Course Team, in particular, their practical knowledge which provided a richness to the course.
- ii) The clear rationale for the programme and the identification of a gap in the market and the Course Team's response to meeting this demand.

The Panel agreed to recommend to the Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement Committee that the programme be approved for a period of **three years** (intakes **September**

2018/19 to 2020/21 inclusive) in line with the revalidation schedule for Unit 15D, subject to the conditions and recommendations of the Panel being addressed and a satisfactory response and a revised submission being forwarded to the Academic Office **by 16 February 2018** for approval by the Chair of the Panel.

Projected intakes recommended by the Faculty

Year of Course	Year of First Intake	Year of Second Intake	Year of Third Intake	Year of Fourth Intake
Year 1 Part-time	24 (September 2018)*	24	24	24
Year 2 Part-time	---	24	24	24

* **Note:** First intake of 24 students approved for **September 2018** and not January 2018 as proposed by the College.

Conditions

- i) That all issues identified by the Academic Office and detailed in the appendix to the panel report are addressed;
- ii) Assurance is to be provided that all resources will be in place in readiness for the start of the programme in September 2018, including staffing, reading list texts and the cabin and related infrastructure, in particular the digital elements (section 3.2 refers);
- iii) To undertake a complete review of the programme structure, in particular the 60 credit points of practice and that this is reduced to 40, and to review the other theory based modules with a view to making them more theoretically informed. In doing so, another 20 credit point module is required. There is currently an absence in the programme in respect of entrepreneurship, cultural awareness and customers and markets and it is the Course Team’s decision how and where in the course these areas will be incorporated (sections 4.2 and 4.5 refer);
- iv) To undertake a complete review of assessment and feedback across all modules to set out a clearer articulation of the learning and teaching strategy. In doing so, to use a broader range of assessments and clearly set out individual assessment weightings in order to demonstrate parity of assessment across all modules and to enhance and enrich the student experience (sections 4.3, 4.4 and 4.6 refer).

Recommendations

- i) To make articulation opportunities clear as well as augmenting the graduate qualities and employability sections of the course document (section 4.1 refers).

6 APPRECIATION

The Chair thanked the Panel, in particular, the external members, and the Course Team for their valuable contribution to the revalidation process.