



**External Expert Review of  
AITs Special Purpose Award: Access Programme  
(Preparatory Programme for Third Level)**

**17-10-2014**

**Justin Rami PhD : School of Education Studies, Dublin City University**

The document reviewed was the Application from AITs School of Engineering for the Special Purpose Award: Access Programme (Preparatory Programme for Third Level).

**Summary comments**

The application was well presented and offered the reader the rationale and aims of the overall programme and how this related to further progression within and outside of AIT.

On review of the document I would recommend that the Programme is progressed through validation and accreditation protocols. However I have added some suggestions, which I believe, would help strengthen the case for the validation of the programme. This report highlights recommendations related to the various sections and component parts of the application.

**General recommendations**

The overall document could benefit from;

- A specific section relating to student profile and cohort-type outlining the specific needs and requirements for this cohort of adults.
- A section outlining entry requirements would also be helpful

**Further observations**

The following are observations and recommendations that may help strengthen the case for the validation of the proposal.

*Section - Part C: Demand for the Programme*

- It may be helpful in the Rationale to refer to a number of relevant regional, local and National policy and strategy documents such as, AITs *Strategic Plan 2014-2018 Global Focus – Regional Impact*, the *National Access Plan (2014-2017)* by the National Access Office, the *Consultation Paper: Towards the*

*development of a new National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education* (NAO 2014). These could be abridged and included on Page 1 as well as in Part C on Pg3.

- Part C could also benefit from more contemporary and up-to-date references. In order to make an business case it may be helpful to outline some statistical data in terms of anticipated numbers, progression rates etc.

#### *Part E : Teaching Learning and Assessment Strategy*

- In this section it may be useful to describe the conceptual and theoretical framework of the programme as a whole and how this dovetails with the Institutes broader strategy.
- With reference to Adult Learners, it may be helpful to add a reference to andragogical approaches unique to the Adult learner (Brookfield, 1986, 1987, 1990, Galbraith, 1990, Knowles, 1980).

#### *Assessment Strategies:*

- Following on from Part E, the assessment strategies could highlight AITs learner-centred approach to learning and assessment in the Access Programme. ie: formative and summative assessment based on a constructivist philosophies; assessment *of* and *for* learning may be both relevant.
- It may also be worth considering reducing the number of terminal written exam elements across the suite of assessments, currently 6 out of 8 modules have a terminal written exam element. Research suggests that Adults perform poorly in sit-down type written exams for a range of androgical reasons (Beaman, 1998).
- It may be possible to breakdown the 100% Continuous Assessment category into a range of assessment components which may offer offer a more formative approach suitable for adult learners, encourage corrective feedback and have a programmatic evaluative function.

#### *Part G: Progression & Transfer opportunities*

- In this section it may be better not to highlight lack of progression opportunities to 'high demand' courses, but rather state in a more general fashion that the Programme prepares students for entry to NFQ 6-7, and that all graduates will have an opportunity to progress to a range of suitable programmes subject to demand and availability of places.

#### *Appendix A:*

- In my opinion the Programme Learning Outcomes are presented clearly and are balanced and relevant to the specific learner cohort.
- All modules outlined are clear and have a clear aims and learning outcomes specific to the suite of offerings.
- Some of he Module Descriptors could benefit from updating Resources and Reading Lists.

## Summary

I am happy to recommend to the validation committee that this proposal be progressed and that the specific comments, observations and recommendations be considered by the programme design team.

External Reviewer: Justin Rami PhD: Dublin City University

Signed:  \_\_\_\_\_

Date: 17-10-14