Report of Validation Panel

Date of Meeting:		9 November 2011

Named Award:	Certificate
Programme Title:	Senior Command Operations
Award Type:	Special Purpose Award
NFQ Level:	Level 9
Intakes Commencing:	Proposed for January 2012
ECTS/ACCS Credits:	30 Credits

PANEL MEMBERS

Name / Function / Institution
Dr Ronán Long, Jean Monnet Chair of European Law, School of Law, NUI Galway
Lt Cdr (retired) Ray Malanaphy, Coastal Unit Sector Manager, Irish Coast Guard
Mr Don Crowley, Head of Department of Continuing Education, CIT
Ms Eva Juhl, Institutional Review Facilitator, CIT

IN ATTENDANCE

Name / Function / Institution
Mr Ian O'Sullivan, Module Moderator, CIT

PROPOSING TEAM MEMBERS

Name / Function / Department
Cdr Martin Counihan, Commander, INS / Commandant, Naval College / Associate Head, NMCI
Lt Cdr Brian Fitzgerald, INS / Head of Planning and Policy, Naval Headquarters
Lt Cdr Tom Hobbins, INS / Chief Instructor, Naval College
Lt Cdr Darragh Kirwan, INS / Head of Officer Training, Naval College
Lt James Harding, INS / Officer Training School, Naval College
Lt Marie Gleeson, INS / Planning and Policy, Naval Headquarters

BACKGROUND TO THE PROPOSED PROGRAMME

The programme proposal is for a **Level 9 Special Purpose Award** entitled **"Certificate in Senior Command Operations"**. The programme as proposed attracts **30 credits** and is submitted by the Irish Naval Service. The non-military elements of the programme will be delivered in the National Maritime College of Ireland, while any military training components will be delivered on the Haulbowline Naval Base.

The proposed programme is based on an existing professional training course for Senior Naval Officers developed by the Irish Defence Forces. The stated intention behind the re-development as a Level 9 Special Purpose Award is to provide graduates with a widely recognised academic award in addition to the professional qualification.

Prior to submission for the final validation review, the re-developed programme specification (programme outcomes, semester schedules and detailed module descriptions) underwent initial desk review by the CIT Module Moderator. Any revisions following this review were incorporated into the documents submitted to the panel as far as possible.

FINDINGS OF THE PANEL

*NOTE: In this report, the term "**Requirement**" is used to indicate an action or amendment which in the view of the Panel **must** be undertaken prior to commencement of the Programme. The term "**Recommendation**" indicates an item to which the Institute/Academic Council/Course Board should give serious consideration for implementation at an early stage and which should be the subject of ongoing monitoring.*

The Panel reviewed the programme documentation and held an in-depth discussion with the proposing Naval Service staff at the NMCI regarding a number of matters including the content and structure of the programme, as well as the academic and professional resources assigned to programme delivery.

Overall, the Panel were very impressed with the quality of the programme, the high calibre of the applicant students, as well as the commitment of the Naval Service staff to academic and professional excellence in programme design and delivery.

The detailed findings, requirements and recommendations of the Panel against the validation criteria are set out in the following sections.

1. Programme-Level Findings

1.1 NEED FOR THE PROGRAMME

Criterion:	Is there a convincing need for the programme with a viable level of applications?
Overall Finding:	**YES**, subject to certain Requirements and/or Recommendations

The proposers indicated that all entrants to the programme would be INS officers with a minimum of 13 years' service. A small percentage (ca. 10%) of the first intake would be entrants with no academic qualifications above Level 6. These entrants would however have gained the requisite experience and demonstrated the required competence and ability throughout their careers to be deemed capable of achieving this award. This was a legacy situation due to changing INS training requirements; any future intakes would fulfil the standard Level 9 entry requirements.

Requirement: The entry requirements for the programme should be clearly stated, with particular reference to the standards applied to students who do not have academic qualifications to Level 8. With regard to the latter, the CIT RPL policy should be referenced. The Panel are aware that the proposed arrangements are transitory in nature and will not become a principal means of entry for programme participation. However, in the interim, this aspect of the programme needs to be kept under constant review to ensure that there is appropriate support and mentoring for such students.

1.2 AWARD

Criterion:	Are the level and type of the proposed award appropriate?
Overall Finding:	**YES**

1.3 LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Criterion:	Is the learning experience of an appropriate level, standard and quality overall?
Overall Finding:	**YES**, subject to certain Requirements and/or Recommendations

The proposed Programme Outcomes are attached as Appendix 1. Findings, requirements and recommendations concerning individual modules are recorded in Section 2 below.

The Panel notes that due to the training requirements of the Irish Naval Service, actual delivery of the programme occurs in three distinct phases over 26 weeks. All timetabled contact hours are delivered in NMCI during an intensive 6-week training period, preceded and followed by prolonged periods of independent learning. The first of these (up to Week 16) is spent at sea, after an initial briefing during which learners are apprised of the milestones for independent learning and related assessment tasks for the period. The final phase is dedicated to completion of a number of post-delivery assessments.

1.3.1

The Panel considers that the role and responsibilities of Naval Service personnel engaged in delivering various modules needs to be clarified, with a view to eliminating duplication and enhancing the synergy between students and the academic / professional staff at the NMCI.

Requirement: In particular, there needs to be a precise demarcation of responsibilities and functions regarding the respective roles of the academic supervisors, the student mentors and the Commanding Officers of Naval Service ships regarding programme delivery and assessment during the first critical programme phase up to Week 16. In this context, the terminology used to refer to the different roles (particularly 'supervisor') should be referenced against the CIT academic quality system as appropriate.

1.3.2

Requirement: The monitoring of student progress during the first phase of the programme needs to be strengthened, with a view to ensuring that the students who are sea-going are fully supported in completing the various modules. Consideration ought to be given to the utilisation of inter-active journals and other web-based tools to ensure the continuous assessment of student performance.

1.3.3

Requirement: Consideration needs to be given to revising the timetable for individual module assessment with a view to ensuring the following:

a. that some form of formal assessment of the learning achieved during the initial 'sea time' phase is undertaken prior to commencement of the in-house delivery at NMCI beginning in Week 17. For instance, multiple-choice tests could be used to evaluate student progression towards the requisite standards for the intensive in-house education & training component;

b. that appropriate assessment is also undertaken to reflect learning achieved on completion of the full programme (rather than the intensive in-house phase) in all modules, except for practical skills exams which are subject to particular logistical constraints (availability of vessels etc.). This is to ensure that students gain the full academic benefit of the entire twenty-six week programme.

1.3.4

The programme as proposed has a number of innovative features which make it unique in many respects. One striking feature is the input into key modules by high profile public figures, such as the CEOs of large public and private companies, as well as specialist academic staff from other Irish academic institutions, on a visiting lecturer basis.

Recommendation: The Panel are of the view that this feature ought to be highlighted and nurtured during the course of implementation, as it can become a major contributory factor which will enhance the long-term success of the programme.

1.4   PROGRAMME STRUCTURE

Criterion:	Is the programme structure logical and well designed (including procedures for access, transfer and progression)?
Overall Finding:	**YES**, subject to certain Requirements and/or Recommendations

The Panel notes that the programme is aligned to the syllabus of training entitled "Senior Command Operations Course" approved by the Irish Defence Forces. The Semester Schedules and Module Descriptors have been re-

developed to accord with CIT's modularised delivery structure. The Schedules as proposed are attached to this report (Appendix 2).

1.4.1
Requirement: In relation to programme documentation, the curriculum vitae of the core academic and professional staff responsible for the delivery of the programme need to be included in the file. In addition, the staff profiles should be updated regularly as personnel rotate to meet the exigencies of the Naval Service.

1.4.2
Requirement: Clarity in the documentation will be improved if (a) schematic diagram(s) are provided which illustrate the core elements of the programme, the timelines, as well as the various methods of assessment. This will also facilitate programme delivery.

1.5 PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

Criterion:	Are the programme management structures adequate?
Overall Finding: YES	

The Panel is satisfied that the proposed arrangements with regard to the management and delivery of the programme are adequate.

1.6 RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS

Criterion:	Are the resource requirements reasonable?
Overall Finding: YES	

The Panel was assured by the Commandant of the Naval College / Associate Head of NMCI on behalf of the Irish Naval Service and the National Maritime College of Ireland that appropriate resources in terms of staffing and facilities will be put in place when the programme is validated.

1.7 IMPACT ON THE INSTITUTE

Criterion:	Will the impact of the programme on the Institute be positive?
Overall Finding: YES	

2. Module-Level Findings

The Panel was informed that the draft modules have been the subject of internal review by the CIT Module Moderator.

In exercising its brief to consider the overall standard and appropriateness of modules, the Panel wishes to add the following findings, requirements and recommendations.

2.1 ALL MODULES

Requirement: Any revisions to Module Descriptors or Semester Schedules made to address the recommendations and requirements in this report need to be signed off the CIT Module Moderator and the Registrar's Office prior to approval by the CIT Academic Council.

2.2 MODULE: Maritime Platform Management

Requirement: The Panel is aware that due to the current constraints of the CIT Course Builder database the actual delivery structure of this Special Purpose Award cannot be fully reflected in the Semester Schedules. However, as Maritime Platform Management is intended as the 'capstone' module for this programme, it should be displayed in Semester 2 in order to give some indication as to the sequencing of the material in the programme.

2.3 MODULE: Command Leadership and HRM

The Panel heard that the extent of the Management and Human Resource Management content taught in this module was sufficient to meet the needs of the INS. Learners on the existing officer training course who had continued to postgraduate education attested to the fact that the material was also at the appropriate academic level.

Recommendation: The Panel noted this, and encourages the proposers to ensure that the actual extent and level of the HRM and Management material included in the programme finds appropriate reflection in the programme description.

3. Conclusion

Based on the above findings, the Panel concluded that the programme meets the prescribed academic standard for the proposed award, is well structured and dovetails comfortably with existing offerings of programmes for the professional development of the Naval Service at the NMCI.

The Panel is happy to confirm that in its view

- the Programme meets the required standards for a Special Purpose Award at Level 9 of the National Framework of Qualifications; and

- the Programme meets the criteria for validation of a new programme adopted by the Academic Council of Cork Institute of Technology.

The Panel therefore recommends that the Programme be validated for five academic years, or until the next programmatic review, whichever is soonest, subject to implementation of the Requirements above, and with due regard to the Recommendations made.

Implementation of Requirements
1.1: **Complete.** CIT RPL Policy referenced in programme documentation. Entry onto the programme is based on rank, experience and performance in the Irish Naval Service, and all entrants are educated to Honours degree level, with exception of a small group of 'legacy entrants' (five in total) selected for Commission based on their performance and potential. Each of these Officers has considerable experience (at least 18 years) within the NS and, due to the nature of the Senior Command Operations programme, would only be recommended as a student by their Head of Branch, based on their ability and performance to date. All learners have a mentor assigned and available to support them throughout.
1.3.1: **Complete.** To provide a clear structure for all concerned, the Associate Head of the College (Commandant of the Naval College) will be the academic supervisor throughout the 26 week programme. In addition, each student will be appointed a mentor from within the NS, suitably qualified at Level 9, to assist with their academic progression. The mentor is appointed at the outset of the programme. During the first phase of the programme, the Associate Head of the College will be responsible for the delivery of the course and assessment of the students for the duration.
1.3.2: **Complete.** All students receive an orientation brief on the modules and course work at the outset of the 26 week programme. This brief further outlines the work plan and timeline for assessments. In addition, the appointment of a suitably qualified mentor at the outset of the programme enables the required level of support to be given to the student during this important phase. Continuous assessment is achieved with the use of web-based journals on each of the five modules that constitute the Certificate in Senior Command Operations. These journals are used extensively throughout the pre- and post- contact phases.
1.3.3: **Complete.** There is constant assessment achieved throughout the 26 week programme. Formal assessment during the first phase (up to and including Week 16) involves a combination of essays and journals, which encompass all modules that constitute the Certificate in Senior Command Operations. In addition, further assessments follow the completion of the 6 week contact phase, involving the use of reflective

journals, critical reviews, reports and presentations.
1.4.1: **Complete.** The curriculum vitae of the core academic and professional staff presently responsible for the delivery of the programme are contained within the programme file. These are updated with any change to staff.
1.4.2: **Complete.** A detailed work plan and assignment timeline is issued to the students at the start of the programme. All students are also issued the methods of assessment for the various modules, including the course work breakdown and overall markings.
2.1: **Complete.** Modules and Programme Descriptor signed off by Module Moderator and Registrar's Office.
2.2: **Complete.** Semester schedules revised accordingly. *Updated* schedules attached to this report.

APPENDIX 1 – Proposed Programme Outcomes

Programme Outcomes

On successful completion of this programme the learner will be able to :

PO1	Knowledge - Breadth	The Senior Command Operations Programme will increase the student's knowledge in the areas of command leadership and human resources management, policy, strategy, doctrine, planning, maritime security, shiphandling, seamanship and maritime law.
PO2	Knowledge - Kind	Demonstrating systematic understanding of knowledge that is required for a command & leadership appointment in the maritime environment.
PO3	Skill - Range	Developing advanced skills in the decision-making process through detailed analysis and reflection of past operations and consideration of future scenarios which may arise in a fast changing environment.
PO4	Skill - Selectivity	Practically apply the programme theory to simulated and live scenarios wrt shiphandling, seamanship and management.
PO5	Competence - Context	The student will have the competencies required to conduct detailed analysis and research on past maritime operations and review of command planning, preparation and execution in order to quantify outcomes and key lessons learned.
PO6	Competence - Role	Understanding and applying "best practice" in modern organisational leadership and management techniques, which enhance ship performance.
PO7	Competence - Learning to Learn	A critical appreciation of the diverse nature of command and the need to address this dynamic and a rapidly changing work environment, through continuing academic and professional learning.
PO8	Competence - Insight	A critical knowledge of the policy and strategic framework within which the organisation operates.

Appendix 2 – Semester Schedules (updated based on requirement 2.2)

Semester Schedules

Semester 1

Mandatory									
Mod Code	**Module Title**	**Co-ordinator**	**Level**	**Credits**	**FT Hours Contact Hours**	**PT Hours Contact Hours**	**Course Work**	**Final Exam**
NAUT9001	Command Leadership and HRM (Draft)	NOEL BARRY	Expert	5.0	1.80	0.00	100.0%	0%
NAUT9002	Naval PPO (Draft)	NOEL BARRY	Expert	5.0	2.55	0.00	100.0%	0%
NAUT9004	Naval Ops & Security Analysis (Draft)	NOEL BARRY	Expert	5.0	3.45	0.00	100.0%	0%

Semester 2

Mandatory									
Mod Code	**Module Title**	**Co-ordinator**	**Level**	**Credits**	**FT Hours Contact Hours**	**PT Hours Contact Hours**	**Course Work**	**Final Exam**
NAUT9005	Op Law & Logistics (Draft)	NOEL BARRY	Expert	5.0	2.35	0.00	100.0%	0%
NAUT9003	Maritime Platform Management (Draft)	NOEL BARRY	Expert	10.0	4.20	0.00	100.0%	0%