

Report of Validation Panel for a Special Purpose, Minor or Supplemental Award

Date of Meeting: 17-4-2018

Named Award: Certificate
Programme Title: Certificate in Sales Strategy and Techniques
Award Type: Minor Award
NFQ Level: 8
Intakes Commencing: September 2018
ECTS/ACCS Credits: 20 Credits

PANEL MEMBERS

Name / Function / External Institution OR CIT Academic Unit
Dr Gearóid Ó Súilleabháin, Head of Dept of Technology Enhanced Learning, CIT (Chair)
Dr Margaret Linehan, Head of School of Humanities, Cork Institute of Technology
Breda O'Dwyer, Manager, CEED - Centre for Entrepreneurship and Enterprise Development, IT Tralee
Hugh Griffin, Chairperson of the Sales Institute of Ireland

IN ATTENDANCE

PROPOSING TEAM MEMBERS

Name / Function / Academic Unit
Dr Pio Fenton, Head of Department, Dept of Marketing & International Business
Jane Leonard, Lecturer, Dept of Organisation and Professional Development
Mr Brian Mc Grath, Head of School, School of Business

BACKGROUND TO THE PROPOSED PROGRAMME

The Department of Marketing and International Business currently provide a Higher Diploma in Business in Sales Management which has helped identify the need for the current programme which is about providing opportunities for those looking for a shorter programme in the field. Successful graduates may also be eligible to continue with the remainder of the Higher Diploma.

This programme is composed of two modules – each of 10 ECTS – which together provide a thorough immersion into the skills required to be effective at a personal level in B2B and B2C sales while also placing significant emphasis on organisational sales strategy. A candidate completing this programme will have a richer understanding of their own approach to sales management with insight into consumer behaviour and buyer behaviour. This, in turn, can lead to more effective sales approaches. It is further anticipated the programme will help the students develop the skills to assess multiple customer needs and motivations, analyse and forecast trends, and develop value-driven solutions in partnership with clients. They will also develop their critical thinking, analytical skills, and the ability to negotiate in a B2B or B2C environment. It is intended finally that students will develop a synthesis of the issues pertaining to effective sales strategy within an organisation with this being achieved through examination of cultural, organisational and professional aspects of business development. Equally, organising for sales effectiveness at an organisational level is a key focus.

The department have identified that many companies in Cork have vacant sales positions, especially in the B2B market. It is also argued that many relevant employers have a preference for hiring and promoting professionally qualified sales personnel and that professional qualifications can be the key enabler in sales people moving into sales management roles.

In developing this programme the department are responding to a number of specific industry requests including Zevas, a contact centre based in Cork who are regularly seeking employees with knowledge of sales approaches that meets the needs of their clients.

Similarly, the department argue the programme can be of specific interest to other sectors such as hospitality and tourism industries with tailored deliveries being possible also in the IT sector as well as within the retail sector.

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 validation and commencement of the Programme. The term “Recommendation” indicates an item which the Course Board (or other relevant Institute unit) should implement at the earliest stage possible, and appropriate implementation of which should be the subject of ongoing monitoring.*

The panel would like to commend the programme team on the quality of the documentation provided as well as their engagement on the day with the panel and their questions. A significant engagement with industry was also apparent throughout, from the documentation and feasibility, through to the modules and the department staff right through to the department’s ongoing involvement with key companies, industry stakeholders, and the employer representatives. The new Certificate and the larger Higher Diploma, which it is part of, aligns clearly and appropriated with established industry and student needs.

On consideration of the documentation provided and discussion of the programme with the proposers, the Panel has arrived at the following Findings, Requirements and Recommendations:

1. Validation Criteria

1.1 Is there a convincing need for the programme with a viable level of applications?

Overall Finding: Yes

Finding(s):

In developing this programme the department are responding to a number of specific industry requests for an accredited course of this kind. The department’s experience in providing the Higher Diploma in Business in Sales Management, from which this certificate is drawn, has also helped establish the contacts, insight and ultimately the viability of a shorter single semester programme which can operate both as a stand-alone offering in its own right and as a first step on the way to students completing the full Higher Diploma. There are also a number of sectors such as, potentially, Tourism and Hospitality and IT which the certificate should be of additional interest to. The department, finally, explain that as the Higher Diploma will continue to run there is no separate “breakeven point” in terms of the number of students they need to recruit for the new certificate.

Recommendation(s): The panel recommend the department, in addition to the above, consider pitching or marketing the course as a retention initiative for employers currently offering unaccredited training in this area.

Recommendation: The panel suggest the department might in time consider enhancing and broadening the offer. This might include adding other modules to create another alternative offering.

Commendation: The panel commend the depth of planned and current engagement with various companies, industries and industry representative groups.

1.2 Are the level and type of the proposed award appropriate?

Overall Finding: Yes

Finding(s): The department argue convincingly that the programme represents a significant level up from actual skills and techniques to strategy, a “big picture” perspective and other hallmarks of a level 8 award. The pre-approved modules of the Higher Diploma from which the certificate is drawn are, additionally, already at level 8.

1.3 Is the learning experience of an appropriate level, standard and quality?

Overall Finding: Yes

Finding(s): Modules are drawn from and shared with the larger Higher Diploma in Business in Sales Management and have been already approved. The panel therefore did not interrogate them with a view to suggesting any fundamental changes. The panel nonetheless were fully satisfied with answers to questions they had regarding the inclusion of certain key topics such as e-commerce and the overall flow, quality and standard of the modules as well as the detail the department provided regarding how the modules are delivered, supported and assessed.

1.4 Is the programme structure logical and well designed (including procedures for access, transfer and progression)?

Overall Finding: Yes

Finding(s): The department are clear on the kinds of students they are trying to recruit. Entry requirements are indicated as typically being an existing level 7 qualification: with the full approval of the panel the department indicates that suitable sales-rated career experience will also be considered through CIT's Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) process. The Department argue convincingly that the availability of this shorter programme will provide a pathway to a level 8 qualification for students reluctant to commit to a higher diploma. Such students, it is envisaged, may subsequently become more open to extending their studies once they have completed the certificate as this make the completion of the remaining credits of the Higher Diploma seem more manageable and less daunting.

1.5 Are the programme management structures adequate?

Overall Finding: Yes

Finding(s): The panel were reassured regarding the level of support for the programme at department, school and faculty level. Details of delivery arrangements, the management structures and QA processes in place for this and other programmes in the department were considered to be of the highest standard.

1.6 Are the resource requirements reasonable?

Overall Finding: Yes

Finding(s): Resources approval has been received for this programme which can be run as part of the larger Higher Diploma in Business in Sales Management at no additional cost.

1.7 Will the impact of the programme on the Institute be positive?

Overall Finding: Yes

Finding(s): The panel commend the department for putting together a coherent well thought out offering which addresses an established need and is delivered by expert staff well-versed in the area and with close industry ties. From the institute's perspective, the certificate represents an excellent vehicle to open doors to parts of business community that the institute has not reached previously and equally to recruiting students outside of its usual markets. It is anticipated at least a few of the graduates of the programme will return to the institute and department to undertake programmes at level 9. As indicated above, the programme also present opportunities to create other offerings for bespoke requirements in other sectors.

CONCLUSION

Based on the above findings, the Panel recommends to Academic Council that the Programme be validated for five academic years, or until the next programmatic review, whichever is soonest with due regard to the Recommendations made above.

Implementation of Requirements and Recommendations
Requiring Registrar's Office Sign-Off:
<p>Recommendation</p> <p>The panel recommends that the department, in addition to the above, consider pitching or marketing the course as a retention initiative for employers currently offering unaccredited training in this area.</p> <p>Departmental Response</p> <p>The Department accepts this valuable feedback and will adapt the proposed marketing strategy to reflect this.</p>
<p>Recommendation</p> <p>The panel suggests the department might in time consider enhancing and broadening the offer. This might include adding other modules to create another alternative offering.</p> <p>Departmental Response This is an initial step in developing a suite of minor awards that are suited to those in sales related careers and in due course we intend to expand it to specialist topics such as international selling.</p>