

## Report of Differential Validation Panel

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Date of Meeting:

**Award Type:** Master of Arts  
**Programme Title:** Master of Arts in Play Therapy  
**Award Class:** Major  
**NFQ Level:** 9  
**ECTS/ACCS Credits:** 90  
**Embedded Award:** Postgraduate Diploma in Arts in Play Therapy (NFQ 9, 60 ECTS)

### PANEL MEMBERS

Name / Function / Institution
Siobhan Dorsch O'Neill, Senior Play Therapist, St Louise Unit, Crumlin Childrens Hospital and Lucena Clinic, Dun Laoghaire (Chairperson)
Marie Ryan, Lecturer in Educational Developmental Psychology and Early Childhood Education, Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick
Dr Stephen Cassidy, Dean of Academic Quality Enhancement, CIT

### PROPOSING TEAM MEMBERS

Name / Function / Department
Dr Margaret Linehan, Head of School of Humanities
Dr Catherine Molyneaux, Head of Department of Applied Social Studies
Karen O'Connor, Programme Co-ordinator & Lecturer, MA in Play Therapy
Mai O'Connor, Lecturer, MA in Play Therapy
Dr Chris Mamo, Lecturer, MA in Play Therapy

## BACKGROUND TO THE PROGRAMME

The Master of Arts in Play Therapy is a 90 ECTS Level 9 programme which is designed to give students the requisite knowledge, skills and competencies to practice as Play Therapists. It aims to equip students with the clinical capacity that would match international standards of best practice within the Play Therapy profession.

The programme has been running for a number of years with a cohort of students enrolled every two years. Students enrolling on the programme hold Honours Bachelor degrees and come from a variety of discipline areas such as Counselling/Psychotherapy, Early Years Education, Occupational Therapy, Primary Education, Psychiatry, Psychology, Psychiatric Nursing, Social Care, Social Work and Special Needs Education. Students must be at least 23 years of age and are required to have a minimum of two years experience of working with children. Students are interviewed to ascertain their overall suitability for the programme.

The programme is delivered exclusively in part-time mode over three academic years. Students complete two years of taught modules making up the Postgraduate Diploma in Arts in Play Therapy followed by modules in research methods and thesis which make up the final 30ECTS credits of the Masters programme. The Postgraduate Diploma award is offered only as an exit award for students not wishing to complete the research elements of the Masters programme.

The second cohort of graduates from the programme are expected to graduate this year. The programme team feel that now is an opportune time to review the design and operation of the programme in light having now delivered two cycles of the programme.

### Major Changes Being Proposed

The programme team wish to create a number of 10 ECTS modules in the practice areas of the programme. Furthermore in relation to the modules in Play Therapy Practice and Advanced Play Therapy Practice where the students works with a child in a professional setting, the programme team are proposing that each of these 10 ECTS modules would be delivered over two semesters.

Approved Modules	Proposed Module	Delivery
Child Development, Play and Attachment (5 ECTS) Child Observation (5 ECTS)	Child Development: Theory & Observation (10 ECTS)	Single Semester
Clinical Work Preparation (5 ECTS) Clinical Work Practice (5 ECTS)	Play Therapy Practice (10 ECTS)	Two semesters
Play Therapy Underpinnings (5 ECTS) Clinical Work Practice Year 2 (5 ECTS)	Advanced Play Therapy Practice (10 ECTS)	Two semesters

The remaining modules on the programme have been reviewed and updated with minor changes to content and assessment being proposed to reflect ongoing developments within the Play Therapy domain.

## Findings of the Panel

The Panel has considered the documentation provided and has discussed the programme with the proposers. Based on this, the Panel has arrived at a number of Findings, Requirements and Recommendations as follows.

### 1. Programme-Level Findings

#### 1.1 LEARNING EXPERIENCE

**Validation Criterion: Is the learning experience of an appropriate level, standard and quality overall?**

Overall Finding: Yes

The proposed Programme Outcomes as presented to the Panel are attached as Appendix 1.

Findings: The panel are happy that the proposed programme outcomes are appropriate for a masters level programme in Play Therapy.

1.1.1 **Requirement:** The mapping describing how the modules support the achievement of the programme outcomes should be completed on Akari.

#### 1.2 PROGRAMME STRUCTURE

**Validation Criterion: Is the programme structure logical and well designed (including procedures for access, transfer and progression)?**

Overall Finding: Yes

Findings: The panel would like to commend the programme team on the overall structure of the proposed programme. The panel believes that this play therapy training is balanced in structure and content and serves the needs of the students while not comprising on course requirements. The programme is supportive of students, recognising students needs on a number of levels, incorporating the workload into periods of self-care and reflection, key to training play therapists to sustain themselves personally and professionally in this highly challenging area of work. The move to year-long modules for the practice modules was well argued at the panel meeting and represents a more accurate presentation on how the practice modules have been delivered to date.

The programme has enrolled two cohorts of students to date. Students eligibility is determined through a number of lenses including educational qualifications, age, experience working with children, overall suitability etc.

1.2.1 **Requirement:** Over the next academic year, the formal process used to determine the eligibility of a student to enrol on the programme should be documented and available to prospective students. In particular, the rubric or criteria being used to evaluate the overall suitability of the student through the interview should be documented.

Students are required to attend a CIT-approved qualified play therapy supervisor throughout the duration of the clinical placement for the practice modules on the programme. The students is required to pay a fee to the play therapy supervisor for these clinical placement sessions.

**1.2.2 Requirement:** Over the next academic year, the programme team should develop a learning agreement outlining the roles and responsibilities of the student, clinical supervisor and Institute for the practice-based elements of the programme. The agreement should cover, inter alia, the expected conduct of the student, teaching and assessment strategies to be used, ethical and GDPR compliance etc.

**1.2.3 Requirement:** Over the next academic year, the Department should develop and document a formal process for the selection of approved clinical placement supervisors. Such a process may lead to the formation of a panel of approved supervisors from which students could select.

## **2. Module-Level Findings**

### **2.1 ALL MODULES**

**Requirement:** Any revisions to Module Descriptors or Semester Schedules made to address the recommendations and requirements in this validation panel report require sign-off from the CIT Module Moderator and the Registrar's Office prior to approval by the CIT Academic Council.

#### **2.2.1 MODULE: Child Development: Theory and Obs.**

This new 10 credit module gives students a thorough grounding in child development, play and attachment theory.

**Recommendation:** Programme team may wish to consider introducing content in relation to atypical development.

#### **2.2.2 MODULE: Play Therapy Research Methods**

**Recommendation:** The panel recommends that the programme team look at alternative software to SPSS to support the statistical sections of this module. One possible alternative to consider would be R which is used in the Data Science programmes in CIT.

#### **2.2.3 MODULE: Play Therapy Research Thesis**

**Requirement:** The panel requires that the assessment by thesis of this module be changed to assessment by paper. The paper format would facilitate the dissemination of research results to the wider academic and Play Therapy community.

## **3. Conclusion**

The Panel 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 and Recommendations

*NOTE: This section is co-completed by the Academic Department and the CIT Registrar's Office.*

*It records the implementation of any panel requirements and the completion of the internal programme and module moderation process. Confirmation of completion by the CIT Registrar's Office is required for both before the programme is submitted to the CIT Academic Council for validation.*

### 1. IMPLEMENTATION OF PANEL REQUIREMENTS

Requirement(s) <i>[Please copy &amp; paste from the report, adding rows as necessary. Completed recommendations can also be indicated.]</i>	Department Response <i>[Academic Department to complete]</i>	Registrar's Office Note <i>[Reg. Office to complete]</i>
...	...	...

### 2. SIGN-OFF ON FINAL PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION (INCLUDING MODULES)

*[This section to be completed by the CIT Registrar's Office]*

The CIT Registrar's Office confirms that:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Programme and Module Moderation Process for this proposed programme is complete; and</li> <li>• The final Programme Specification and associated Module Descriptors are deemed ready to be submitted to Academic Council for approval.</li> </ul>	
Signed: ____	Date: ____

Notes/Commentary:

## APPENDIX 1 – PROPOSED PROGRAMME OUTCOMES

### Programme Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this programme the graduate will be able to demonstrate... :

#### PO1 Knowledge - Breadth

Demonstrate an advanced knowledge of the history and development of Play Therapy which will enable them to understand the role it plays in psychological theory. Critically evaluate a wide variety of Play

- (a) Therapy models which have an in-depth insight into a range of appropriate approaches that are used in Play Therapy research. Develop research proposals arising from their practice as a Play Therapist and communicate these in an academic way through a research dissertation.

#### PO2 Knowledge - Kind

Demonstrate the competence and the in-depth knowledge required to integrate theory with practice through group and individual Play Therapy interventions. Demonstrate a broad and thorough

- (a) understanding of children's individual clinical needs, including knowledge relating to children's mental health, disability, emotional trauma and abuse. Document their work accurately and use the collected data for both clinical and research purposes. Develop their creative skills to use in therapeutic practice.

#### PO3 Skill - Range

- (a) Critically apply and uphold the principles and practice of clinical governance. Demonstrate an ability to work therapeutically with children in a safe, ethical and professional manner.

#### PO4 Skill - Selectivity

Assess therapeutic needs and maintain safe boundaries appropriate to Play Therapy practice. Work with a

- (a) wide range of clinical issues and plan and deliver effective Play Therapy interventions to groups and individuals.

#### PO5 Competence - Context

Reflect on the importance of personal process in the therapeutic relationship. Ascertain and evaluate issues relating to transference and countertransference that surface. Objectively analyse own creative process through self-reflection, personal understanding, engaging in the therapeutic process, developing empathy and identifying personal weaknesses and vulnerability.

- (a)

#### PO6 Competence - Role

Undertake a substantial professional lead and conduct Play Therapy interventions within a variety of clinical and institutional settings and client groups. Integrate the different dimensions of Play Therapy - theoretical, clinical, research, personal process and reflective practice necessary to become an effective and safe practitioner.

- (a)

#### PO7 Competence - Learning to Learn

Understand the impact of ethical and professional considerations that arise in Play Therapy practice. Have an appreciation of the need of continuing professional development (CPD) as well as the ability to reflect on the importance of clinical supervision in clinical safe practice.

- (a)

#### PO8 Competence - Insight

Contribute to the advancement and profile of the profession through original academic research and practice in compliance with the relevant code of ethics.

- (a)

**APPENDIX 2 – SEMESTER SCHEDULES**

<i>Stage 1 / Semester 1</i>								
Mandatory								
<b>Mod Code</b>	<b>Module Title</b>	<b>Co-ordinator</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Credits</b>	<b>FT Contact Hours</b>	<b>PT Contact Hours</b>	<b>Course Work</b>	<b>Formal Exam</b>
No Code Yet	Child Development:Theory &Obs. (Draft)	Catherine Molyneaux	Expert	10.0	0.00	5.00	100.0	0.0
No Code Yet	Play Therapy Practice (Draft)	Catherine Molyneaux	Expert	10.0	0.00	2.00	100.0	0.0
<i>Stage 1 / Semester 2</i>								
Mandatory								
<b>Mod Code</b>	<b>Module Title</b>	<b>Co-ordinator</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Credits</b>	<b>FT Contact Hours</b>	<b>PT Contact Hours</b>	<b>Course Work</b>	<b>Formal Exam</b>
PSYC9009	Play Therapy Theory (Draft)	Catherine Molyneaux	Expert	5.0	0.00	3.00	100.0	0.0
No Code Yet	Play and Creative Expression (Draft)	Catherine Molyneaux	Expert	5.0	0.00	2.00	100.0	0.0

<i>Stage 2 / Semester 1</i>									
Mandatory									
Mod Code	Module Title	Co-ordinator	Level	Credits	FT Contact Hours	PT Contact Hours	Course Work	Formal Exam	
PSYC8011	Interpersonal Neurobiology (Draft)	Catherine Molyneaux	Advanced	5.0	0.00	3.00	100.0	0.0	
No Code Yet	Family Contexts in PlayTherapy (Draft)	Catherine Molyneaux	Expert	5.0	0.00	3.00	100.0	0.0	
No Code Yet	Advanced PlayTherapy Practice (Draft)	Catherine Molyneaux	Expert	10.0	0.00	1.00	100.0	0.0	
<i>Stage 2 / Semester 2</i>									
Mandatory									
Mod Code	Module Title	Co-ordinator	Level	Credits	FT Contact Hours	PT Contact Hours	Course Work	Formal Exam	
PSYC9014	Sand and Art Therapy (Draft)	Catherine Molyneaux	Expert	5.0	0.00	2.00	100.0	0.0	
<i>Stage 3 / Semester 1</i>									
Mandatory									
Mod Code	Module Title	Co-ordinator	Level	Credits	FT Contact Hours	PT Contact Hours	Course Work	Formal Exam	
EDUC9031	Play Therapy Research Methods (Draft)	Catherine Molyneaux	Expert	10.0	0.00	3.00	100.0	0.0	
<i>Stage 3 / Semester 2</i>									
Mandatory									
Mod Code	Module Title	Co-ordinator	Level	Credits	FT Contact Hours	PT Contact Hours	Course Work	Formal Exam	
No Code Yet	Play Therapy Research Thesis (Draft)	Catherine Molyneaux	Expert	20.0	2.00	2.00	100.0	0.0	