

VALIDATION REPORT



1.	Title of Programme(s): (incl. Award Type and Specify Embedded Exit Awards)	Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Psychology
2.	NFQ Level(s)/ No. ECTS:	Level 8 240 ECTS
3.	Duration:	4
4.	ISCED Code:	0310
5.	School / Centre:	ATU Galway Mayo
6.	Department:	Nursing, Health Science & Integrated Care
7.	Type of Review:	New Programme
8.	Date of Review:	29/11/2022
9.	Delivery Mode:	Full Time
10.	Panel Members:	Dr Joe McGarry, Education Consultant (Chair) Dr Pdraig MacNeela, Head of School of Psychology, University of Galway Dr William Farr, Senior Teaching Associate, University of Cambridge Dr Ailise Burke, Clinical Psychologist Ms Carmel Brennan, Assistant Registrar, ATU (Secretary)
11.	Proposing Staff:	Dr Justin Kerr Dr Christina Larkin Dr Maggie Wood Dr Teresa Bruen Dr Maura Fitzsimons Dr Sean Foy Dr Elaine McHugh
12.	Programme Rationale:	This programme has been designed to meet the needs of the undergraduate student of Psychology. The discipline of Psychology is focused on our understandings of the individual, our cognition and behaviour alongside our understanding of

		<p>the human condition. This programme has the central themes of psychology, namely, Biological, Developmental, Individual Difference, Cognitive and Social Psychology in line with the PSI accreditation process.</p> <p>This programme is timely in that the world has experienced and continues to experience a global pandemic. The effects of this are far-reaching. A recent review of the experience of quarantine has revealed some emotional outcomes such as anger, frustration, stress, depression etc within the surveyed population.</p> <p>There is a need for more students of psychology, particularly psychology graduates with a knowledge of scientific enquiry in a variety of disciplines given the vast amount of psychology driven research which exists. The contribution a psychology graduate can make to understanding the human condition be it in research or practice applications can be immense. For example, the influence psychology can have on behaviour change within a health promotion context can impact on reduction of the detrimental effects of issues such as global warming and the pandemic.</p> <p>This programme will provide a sound platform for the undergraduate student to progress into a variety of areas and disciplines. Some examples of these would be in the caring professions, youth work, project work and the specialised areas within psychology, counselling, clinical, research, educational, organisational etc.</p>
13.	Proposed Student Intake:	20
14.	Stakeholder Engagement:	<p>The programme development team consulted with practice experts via a Teams meeting and an online survey. The respondents were from a wide variety of areas including social work, youth work, counselling, clinical psychology, addiction and teaching. The group felt that there was a strong national, regional and local market for the programme, with very high numbers on places. Programmes in universities are currently oversubscribed. All respondents thought that there was a need for a psychology degree programme in County Mayo and that would provide a pool of expertise within the region. They commented that graduates with a broad understanding of people and their needs will be of use in all areas and will lead to a more empathic and educated staff for clients.</p> <p>Respondents indicated that such a programme would offer students the opportunity to pursue a wide range of job</p>

		opportunities and would strengthen the practice of psychology in the region across a wide range of areas. Positive links could be created between practitioners and academics.
15.	Graduate Demand/Employment:	<p>Assistant psychologist, researcher, project worker, human resources, marketing, and support worker are a selection of posts which would be open to graduates of this programme.</p> <p>Further posts in Psychology are Clinical Psychologist, Counselling Psychologist, Educational and Forensic, Health, Neuro Psychologist Sport Organisational psychology on completion of post-graduate study.</p>
16.	Entry Requirements, Access, Transfer & Progression:	<p>Grade O6/H7 or better in six Leaving Certificate subjects including English or Irish and Mathematics, two of which must be passed in higher level papers at Grade H5 or higher.</p> <p><u>Mature student entry:</u> There are separate entry routes by which mature students may enter Atlantic Technological University (ATU):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Through CAO using a previous qualification: Leaving Certificate. 2. Through the CAO using the mature students route as a special category: Candidates must be 23 or over on the 1st of January in the year of entry to the course, applying through the CAO and filling in pages 3 and 4 of the application form. Places will be awarded in July and August, through the CAO. <p><u>English Language requirements:</u> _English language requirements will be determined by ATU. The current requirement is set out in the Academic Code of Practice No. 4 Access, Transfer and Progression Academic. (2018/19 p.8) which states “In addition to minimum entry requirements, non-native English speakers have language entry requirements. (a) EU, non-native English speakers who are applicants for Level 6, 7 and 8 programmes are recommended to have a minimum score of 5.5 in the IELTS or equivalent. (b) Non-EU, non-native English speakers who are applicants for Level 6, 7 and 8 programmes are required to have a minimum score of 5.5 in the IELTS or equivalent.”</p> <p><u>Garda vetting:</u> Garda vetting is required.</p> <p><u>Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL):</u> RPL will be in line with Code of Practice no. 6 and will be managed on a case-by-case basis. Where required the</p>

		Department of Nursing, Health Science and Integrated Care will liaise with the International Office to map progression from partner colleges abroad.
17.	Programme Structure:	<p>This is a four-year programme designed as a BSc (Hons) in Psychology. The programme is designed around six key components which are regarded as central to the discipline of psychology. These six key components are biological psychology, developmental psychology, social psychology, individual difference, and cognitive psychology. The sixth component is scientific research methods education. Research methods are integral to psychology and students must obtain a sound knowledge of, and a proven ability to use, a range of methods appropriately, including both quantitative and qualitative methods. This is regarded as an integral aspect of the programme throughout and is reflected in the ECTS weighting for this subject area (50 ECTS in total).</p> <p>The programme delivers core content across modules within an integrated curriculum that offers an appropriate pedagogical development of students' knowledge, understanding, and skills from introductory level in year one to an advanced practice and theoretical applied focus in year 4.</p>
18.	Learning, Teaching & Assessment Strategies:	<p>Within this programme, teaching and learning methodologies aim to facilitate a balance between expanding the student's knowledge, critical thinking, and reflective skills, and subscribing to the student as an active learner with much to contribute to their own learning.</p> <p>In stage one the approach is Introducing the students to the core areas of psychology, learning skills and research appreciation.</p> <p>In stage two the core areas are further explored and abnormal psychology, psychology of conflict and developmental psychology across the lifespan are introduced.</p> <p>In stage three the focus is on the application of theories and knowledge to practice involving a practice placement.</p> <p>Finally, in stage four it comes together through critical analysis and the synthesis of clinical experience, theories and a research project culminating in the attainment of a level 8 BSc (Honours) in Psychology.</p>

		<p>A programme-focused assessment strategy is in place that maps clearly on to programme and module learning outcomes, incorporates a wide range of formative and summative assessments, and which reflects students' development of knowledge, skills and competencies as they progress through their studies, as appropriate to the mode of study. The programme assessment strategy is devised by the Programme Board. It is contextualised for the programme, the discipline, the student cohort, and the learning environment. The assessment strategy is influenced by the programme's learning outcomes and aims to demonstrate that students have achieved these.</p> <p>Assessment in each module will be based on a continuous assessment element and/or a final examination.</p>
19.	<p>Resource Implications:</p>	<p>An additional 3.5 Academic staff to support this programme are required.</p> <p>Additional resources such as psychological testing materials, specialist equipment, and software supporting psychological research (data collection and analysis), and other information technology and/or audio-visual facilities (e.g., to enable the recording of practice role-plays and competency assessment tasks), as appropriate to the provision and mode of delivery in question are required.</p> <p>Placement officer 1WTE at Grade 7</p> <p>One of the recommendations by the panel is that further detail be provided on resource requirements and the development of a plan to ensure that they are available.</p>
20.	<p>Synergies with Existing Programmes:</p>	<p>None.</p>
21.	<p>Findings and Recommendations:</p>	<p>Commendations:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The applied nature of the programme with the inclusion of a placement module. 2. The programme exhibits psychology in action through the teaching strategy. 3. The emerging specialisations are compatible with an applied and contemporary focus. 4. The Department and programme proposers are commended for the commitment and work involved in developing the programme and diversifying the Department's offerings. <p>Conditions:</p>

		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Give further consideration to the programme title given the applied nature of the programme. 2. Provide further detail on how the placement will operate from the student perspective, ensuring that the benefits to students are clear. This should include the number, duration and range of placement types. 3. Document in detail how placements will be sourced and managed. Include the quality indicators that will determine the appropriateness of a placement location and the quality assurance mechanisms that will be in situ for the management and execution of placements. Describe the distress protocols that will be in place for students on placements. Outline how placement mentors' expectations will be managed, and how they will be supported during the student placement. Make sure that psychology is the focus for all placements and ensure that placements organised by the college are available to students beyond clinical and mental health settings. 4. Review the appropriate start date for this programme considering the preparatory work and promotion required, and particularly the necessity to recruit additional psychologists for the delivery of this programme. Confirm how many additional staff are required to commence the programme. Specific skills sets should be identified as should the point of programme roll-out that they are required. In addition, elaborate on non-staff resources which are necessary to deliver the programme. Clarify when laboratory and other space will be required. Ensure that there is a realistic plan in place to allow the programme launch and operate effectively by the planned start date. 5. The programme should be psychologist led. Ensure that the disciplinary culture of psychology is appropriately represented in the Department, and it is nurtured as the ethos underpinning the programme.
		<p>Recommendations:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify the competencies that students should have on completion of the programme, and map where and how students will develop these. Identify where modules interact, mapping the student journey through relevant domains e.g., social, mental health. Consider students' knowledge and skills set at the end of each stage of the programme. This will allow for incremental building of knowledge and skills throughout the degree. 2. Elaborate on the programme assessment strategy, including how assessments can interact. Assessments should be clearly linked to desired competencies e.g., critical thinking, academic writing. Review the assessment load considering student wellbeing to ensure that students are not over-assessed. 3. In the future consider other programme structures, for example a three-year level 8 degree followed by a one-year masters programme, or potentially both a 3 year and 4-year

degree programme option for students, the latter of which would include a placement year.

4. The development of a three-year exit award would provide additional flexibility for students and should be discussed by the Programme Board. In the meantime, remove all mentions of the level 7 award from the programme documentation.
5. Consider whether a module focussing on Social Prescribing could or should be included in the programme.
6. The programme would benefit from the explicit inclusion of a recovery, resilience and neurodiversity approach that complements the deficit-based illness diagnosis model. It would be beneficial to include mental health and wellbeing session for students as part of the programme.
7. Greater appreciation of diversity, inclusion and identity should be evident in the curriculum. Contemporary issues such as gender would engage students early in the programme, perhaps in the Introduction to Individual Differences module.
8. Student self-care and wellbeing should be explicitly integrated into the programme.
9. Engage with Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI) as soon as possible to ensure a timely accreditation process.
10. Address layout issues and typos before submitting the documentation to PSI.


Modules:

11. Review reading lists to clearly distinguish required and recommended reading. Ensure that all reading lists are up to date.
12. Consider whether 10 ECTS modules could be delivered in one semester rather than over the year to ensure continuity and student engagement.
13. Clearly specify the repeat assessment strategy for each module to provide clarity to students reading module descriptors.
14. Identify scope to increase the volume of research methods in the programme ensuring that it is sufficiently threaded throughout. All research modules should be amended to be non-compensatable. Any references re failed elements and Pass/Fail should be removed.
15. Ensure that module learning outcomes are varied reflecting the competencies that students will attain and written at the appropriate level in all instances. Learning outcomes should not be overly generic and should show evidence of student progression.

Recommendations Relating to Specific Modules

NURS06081 Introduction to Research in Psychology: Include quantitative methods and statistical analysis in this and all

		<p>research modules in the programme. Expand on the role of tutorials within the module's Teaching & Learning Strategy.</p> <p>NURS06084 Behaviour and Cognition: Ensure that the module learning outcomes make the connection between behaviour and cognition.</p> <p>EDUS06001 Learning and Innovation Skills: Replace with 'Academic and Professional Skills' module.</p> <p>NURS06098 Social Psychology II: Psychology of Conflict: Include learning outcome(s) reflecting practical group work and student wellbeing.</p> <p>NURS06098 Social Psychology II: Psychology of Conflict: Include learning outcome(s) reflecting practical group work and student wellbeing.</p> <p>NURS06094 Counselling Skills: Consider an alternative module title so that student's expectations of the module will be realistic.</p> <p>NURS07107 Developmental Psychology III: Ageing: Enter hours for this module into the module descriptor.</p> <p>NURS07102 Dual Diagnosis: Consider whether it is appropriate that this module be included at undergraduate level. If it is decided to retain the module its title should be revised as the current title is not appropriate. An alternative title might be Co-occurring Diagnosis.</p> <p>PLAC07027 Practice Placement Module: Student contact hours only should appear on the Approved Programme Schedule.</p> <p>Other modules: NURS06085 2022 Introduction to individual differences NURS06106 2022 Foundations of Developmental Psychology NURS06110 2022 Psychology : An Introduction NURS06083 2022 Introduction to Social Psychology</p> <p>Stage 2 Modules NURS06102 2022 Cognitive Psychology II NURS06092 2022 Biological psychology NURS06096 2022 Individual Difference II Abnormal Psychology NURS06109 2022 Developmental psychology 2: Middle Childhood NURS06107 2022 Research Ethics NURS06091 2022 Research Statistics</p> <p>Stage 3 Modules NURS07108 2022 Biological psychology II: Neuropsychology NURS07106 2022 Quantitative Research Methods NURS07105 2022 Qualitative Research Methods NURS07110 2022 Reflective Practice NURS07109 2022 Social Psychology III Organisational Psychology NURS07096 2022 Forensic Psychology</p> <p>Stage 4 Modules NURS08150 2022 Applied Research Project NURS08153 2022 Psychological Approaches</p>
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22.	FAO: Academic Council:	Approved:	
		Approved subject to recommended changes:	X
		Not approved at this time:	
	Signed:	<i>Joe Mc Garry</i>	
		Chair	Secretary