



**Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology
BA Honours in Creative Music Production**

**External Panel Validation
30th March 2017**

Panel Members:

Academic Experts:

Chair: Dr Roy Ferguson, Director of Quality, University College Dublin

Mr Rory Walsh, School of Computing, Music and Creative Media, Dundalk IT

Dr Linda O’Keeffe, Lancaster Institute of Contemporary Art, UK

Industry Experts:

Ms Marie Pieprzownik, Masterlabs, Dublin

Mr Brian Hogan, Musician, Dublin

IADT/STC:

Dr Annie Doona, President, IADT

Dr Andrew Power, Registrar, IADT

Ms Jessica Fuller, Head of Creative Engagement, IADT

Mr David Smith, Head of Faculty of Film, Art & Creative Technologies, IADT

Mr Rónán O’Muirthile, Head of National Film School, IADT

Mr Liam Doona, Head of Department of Design & Visual Arts, IADT

Mr Geoffrey Perrin, Course Coordinator, BA in Creative Music Production,

Mr Conor Brennan, Department of Film and Media, IADT

Dr Ruth Moran, Assistant Lecturer, Dept. Technology & Psychology, IADT

Dr Brian Carty, Director of Education, Sound Training Centre, Dublin

Mr David Christophers, Principal Lecturer, STC

Mr Thom McDonnell, Lecturer, STC

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1. Introduction

STC is a for-profit college specializing in the delivery of high end, industry standard training in the areas of Music Technology, Sound Engineering, Live Sound and Lighting. STC offers qualifications certified by FETAC, City and Guilds, Avid and Ableton, and in conjunction with IADT, at level 7 under the National Framework of Qualifications criteria.

IADT is an Institute of Technology established under the Institutes of Technology Act (1992 – 2006). IADT has delegated authority to make awards at level 7, 8 and 9 – the latter for both taught and research programmes.

In September 2014 IADT and STC commenced a collaborative partnership, delivering a three year, level 7 Bachelor of Arts in Creative Music Production. The programme has been very successful, attracting students with high entry points and with a retention rate of 85%. This rate is considerably higher than other level 7 programmes and approaching the retention rate of IADT's level 8 programmes.

Feedback from external examiners has indicated that the high caliber and delivery of the programme indicates a move to level 8 is appropriate. The programme team feels the move will further enhance the core aim of meeting the demands of industry, equipping students with key skills in music production, sound engineering, audio software and hardware skills, along with transferable soft skills essential for working in industry.

This document outlines the proposed update of DL704, a level 7 Bachelor of Arts in Creative Music Production, to an ab initio level 8 Bachelor of Arts Honours in Creative Music Production. The existing three year programme was originally designed to move to a level 8 during its third year of delivery, so no significant changes to the existing modules in years 1 – 3 are required. The programme will continue to be delivered collaboratively by IADT and STC.

This report refers to the academic management of the programme. A separate document, a Memorandum of Understanding between IADT and STC, outlines the broader collaborative agreement, including management and governance of the programme, legal arrangements and funding.

Over the course of the day, the panel were given a tour of the space resources and technical facilities available to students at both sites; IADT in Dun Laoghaire and STC in Temple Bar, Dublin.

2. Private meeting of panel

The Panel held private discussions to identify key issues for discussion with the senior management and the programme team, including:

- Gender balance
- Facilities/staffing
- Programme delivery
- Programme structure
- Entry requirements
- Assessment (repeat mechanisms)
- Graduate opportunities
- Student supports

3. Meeting with IADT/STC Management

The panel met with senior IADT/STC management to discuss overarching issues relating to the delivery of the programme (staffing, facilities) and how the proposal fits within the IADT strategy. Core objectives of the strategy include a focus on industry and employability, collaboration and a partnership approach. The partnership between IADT and STC has benefits for both institutions. The proposal is a practice based programme within a professional industry context, affording unique opportunities for the learner from the start. The rigor of academic quality assurance is complemented by an industry standard professional environment, affording links into the music, film and creative industries.

The programme sits within the IADT suite of programmes, and the Institute is the awarding body, under their delegated authority remit. Protection of learners is embedded in the agreement between IADT and STC.

All proposals are subjected to a rigorous internal quality assurance process, as outlined in the IADT Procedure for the Development and Approval of New Programmes (available on the Institute website). All Institute quality assurance processes are informed by the policies and procedures criteria set out by Quality and Qualifications Ireland, the successor to the Higher Education and Training Awards Council.

Gender Balance

The issue of gender balance of staff and students was discussed. Overall the figures for staff and students at IADT work out at approximately 50/50. It was acknowledged that work needs to be done on redressing the figures for some programmes including the current level 7 BA in Creative Music Production. The Executive are implementing plans to tackle the issue, and the Registrar of IADT has recently been appointed as the Vice President for Equality and Diversity at the Institute. A week long programme entitled Women in Film ran at the Institute last year for transition students, and a similar project around Women in Technology is planned for next year. STC sponsor Girls Rock, an international project that will take place in Ireland this year, with all female academics staff, to encourage young women into the industry. On the current level 7 programme, 26% of students are now female, an improvement on previous years' figures.

Facilities

IADT has a high standard of equipment and resources (audio-visual projection, appropriate software, PC, smart boards, whiteboards) available in classrooms/lecture theatres and laboratories. Computer laboratories are fitted out with high-end workstations to facilitate the cutting edge software that is used by the students.

The resources in STC are of the highest industry standard.

The facility has a 60 seat lecture hall, 3 iMac labs, a PC lab, rehearsal/meeting spaces, a student common area, staffed reception, and academic offices. Each iMac lab has all industry standard software installed (ProTools, Logic, Ableton...). Midi controllers, high end headphones etc. are all available to students.

Staffing

IADT currently has a high number of staff with PhD qualifications. Part of the Institute strategy is to encourage professional practice. All IADT staff development programmes are open to STC staff. A level 9 certificate in Learning and Teaching was initiated at IADT, to facilitate professional training and development for STC staff. Currently two staff members at STC are undertaking Masters level study at IADT. The tradition of IADT academic professional development and the industry expertise and professional standards of STC has resulted in a partnership that has benefitted staff in both institutes.

Programme Delivery

The programme has been designed to utilize the strengths and expertise of each partner institution. Students will attend at IADT two days a week, and STC three days a week. Students can transfer projects across both sites using Pro Tools. Teaching is delivered by both IADT and STC staff and is broken down by site level. There is parity of staff between the practical and theoretical elements delivered, and critical and contextual studies staff on the programme traverse both strands.

There are regular meetings of the programme management team, the collaborative management team, and the programme board team, to monitor and review programme structure, students' progress, delivery modes, learning outcomes and assessment methods.

4. Meeting with the Programme Team

Programme Structure

The Panel reviewed the detailed specification for each module of learning. The aim of the programme is to equip students with a corporate skill set combined with soft skills; an essential mix to succeed within the industry.

Students will progress through the four years on the programme with a focus on:

- core skills in year 1
- consolidation of skills in year 2
- specialization in year 3
- professional practice in year 4.

Entry Requirements

Students submit a portfolio of work by 1st February each year. The combined score of the portfolio work and CAO points will determine a student securing a place on the programme. Students receive feedback on their portfolio, and feedback suggests applicants find this beneficial, and reflects on 1st preference choices for programmes.

IADT has robust recognition of prior learning procedures in place, available on the Institute website. The Institute also accepts direct entry applications to continuing years on the programme.

Memorandum of Understanding agreements have been agreed with FETAC colleges such as Sallynoggin, Blackrock, and Stillorgan institutes of further education, whereby students can gain entry to IADT programmes, including the programme under discussion.

Repeat Mechanisms

Students may be set a summer project as a repeat mode if this can be accommodated. The practice is to review the overall student's work on a case by case basis, and if possible a summer project may be set as a repeat mode. However this will depend on whether specialist supports are needed by the student, in which case the typical repeat mode for practice based programmes is to repeat with attendance.

Graduate Opportunities

The programme is broad and offers different career paths, such as VFX, the gaming industry, animation, film and visual communications

Student Supports

Students on the programme can avail of support services at IADT and will have full access to student services including counseling, health, welfare and other supports.

The meeting was positive with robust engagement in the discussions. The panel thanked the team for their contribution to the process.

5. Findings and Recommendations of the Panel

Conditions

There were no conditions attached to the validation of the programme.

Recommendations

1. The panel recommends the team give real consideration to the gender profile of the programme for future recruitment campaigns. Consider the visibility factor in publicity material, staff profiles, and outreach programmes to secondary school students.
2. The panel recommends the retention of a level 7 exit award on completion of third year. This flexibility is important for those who for various reasons may wish to exit the programme early, including availing of employment opportunities.
3. Review the descriptors for the module Professional Practice, to make the language more specific. Consider replacing the two sample assignments with more generic examples, as the current examples do not adequately reflect the scope of the project.
4. Consider more detailed descriptions for the year 4 modules (learning outcomes etc.) to better demonstrate the progress from level 7 to level 8.
5. In an effort to address the gender balance, the panel recommends a review the reading lists, specifically for the year 4 module, Creative Entrepreneurship.
6. Clarify in the document what the student should expect to deliver for the Client Based Production module in year 2. Emphasize the hypothetical aspect of the client based work, which is a simulation of a real industry client.
7. Considering the bulk of sound work is studio based, the team should consider employing a designated sound design professional, appropriate to teach the modules on the programme. The emphasis of the programme is currently on theory.

Commendations

The panel commended the team on the quality of the programme, noting it could stand with any other programmes offered in the industry. The level of demand for the programme was clear to the panel. The team had demonstrated clear collegiate engagement, and on behalf of the panel the Chair thanked the team for an enjoyable and informed candid discussion.