

# Validation Report



## **Master of Arts in Art Research Collaboration**

## **Postgraduate Diploma in Art Research Collaboration (title TBC)**

\*(See update of Sept 2014 at the end of report regarding decision on final title: confirmed as MA in Art and Research Collaboration)

Programme Code: TBC  
Banner Code: TBC

## Introduction

The purpose of this document is to report on the findings of the peer review panel established to validate this proposed programme against the criteria for the validation of programmes as outlined in Section 3 of the IADT Quality Manual; *Procedures for Design and approval of New Programmes, Subjects and Modules*.

<http://www.iadt.ie/en/InformationAbout/IADTQualityManual/>

## Programme overview

The proposed MA in Art Research Collaboration is a 2 year full time programme leading to an award at NFQ level 9. It is anticipated the programme will take in the first cohort of students in September 2014.

## Background

The MA in Visual Arts Practices was first validated in May 2003, and registered the first cohort of students on the programme in January 2004.

In April 2010 the programme team submitted an outline proposal for the development of a new, two year format for the programme. This proposal to develop the programme was approved by the IADT Programme Validation Sub-Committee (PVC) and Academic Council.

A year later in April 2011, IADT was awarded Delegated Authority to award taught level 9 programmes. The programme team submitted the new, two year programme document to PVC in January 2012 and to Academic Council in February 2012, for final approval.

The restructured MAVIS programme was validated by external panel on 13<sup>th</sup> February 2012, with the first intake of students in January 2013. The academic year 2013-2014 will be the final year of the programme in its current format.

The MA in Art Research collaboration presents a new approach to postgraduate art education, drawing upon the reputation built and insights gained in IADT over ten years (2004-2014) of delivering the MA in visual Arts Practices (MAVIS)

## Structure of Programme

The proposed programme is a 120 credit programme taught over two years (60 credits per year). Students who successfully complete all four year one modules may exit the programme with the award of postgraduate Diploma Art Research Collaboration.

Year 1 comprises 4 mandatory modules

- |   |            |
|---|------------|
| 1. Thematic Seminar: Critique, Technologies & Publics | 20 credits |
| 2. Critical Research: Foundations, Futures and Skills | 10 credits |
| 3. Collaborative Project                              | 10 credits |
| 4. Research & Practice Review                         | 20 credits |

Year 2 comprises 2 modules

- |                                  |            |
|----------------------------------|------------|
| 5. Research & Collaboration Plan | 20 credits |
| 6. Major Project                 | 40 credits |

## Programme detail

<b>Programme title</b>	Master of Arts in Art Research Collaboration (TBC)
<b>Award title</b>	Master of Arts
<b>NFQ<sup>I</sup> level</b>	9
<b>ECTS<sup>II</sup> credits</b>	120
<b>Programme code</b>	TBC
<b>Banner code</b>	TBC
<b>Validation Date</b>	8 <sup>th</sup> May 2014

<sup>I</sup> National Framework of Qualifications

<sup>II</sup> European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System

## Panel members

**Chairperson**

Dr Joseph Ryan  
Registrar  
Athlone Institute of Technology  
Co Westmeath

**Panel member 1**

Dr Sandra Johnston  
Lecturer in Fine Art  
Northumbria University  
UK

**Panel member 2**

Prof Kathleen James-Chakraborty  
Professor of Art History  
University College Dublin

**Panel member 3**

Ms Josephine Kelliher  
Curator & Director of Rubicon Gallery  
Dublin

**IADT**

Dr Annie Doona, President, IADT  
Dr Marian O'Sullivan, Registrar, IADT  
Laura Devlin, Panel Administration

**Programme Team**

Dr Andrew, Head of Faculty of Film, Art & Creative Technologies  
Mr Liam Doona, Head of Department of Design & Visual Arts  
Dr Maeve Connolly, Lecturer, Department of Design & Visual Arts  
Dr Sinead Hogan, Lecturer, Department of Design & Visual Arts

**Session I**

Private meeting of Panel to discuss observations, concerns and queries around the document content or programme structure

**Session II**

Panel meeting with President/Head of Faculty to discuss;

- Outline of Institute's strategy including recent developments
- Resource and staffing issues for the provision of the proposed programme

**Session III**

Panel meeting with Head of Department and programme team to discuss:

- Rationale for the development of this programme
- Structure, aims of programme
- Demand for programme
- Learner profile
- Entry requirements
- Career opportunities

**Session IV**

Meeting with Panel and programme team continued:

- Programme curriculum and module content
- Assessment strategies and methodologies
- Learning outcomes

**Session V**

Feedback to President, Registrar, Faculty/Department Head and programme team (Panel decision)

## **Panel general findings**

In evaluating the appropriateness, quality and proposed operation of the programme the following criteria were considered:

### **Strategic planning**

The Institute vision and strategy is reflected in the aims of the MA in Art Research Collaboration, which seeks to operate within the new higher education landscape, which offers both opportunities and challenges for art research:

- Developing postgraduate programmes
- Cross-discipline format
- Routes for student progression , into postgraduate programmes and on to professional practice
- Collaboration between research and pedagogy
- Links with creative and cultural sectors
- Internationalisation
- Industry/employability focus
- The Creative Entrepreneurship agenda

### **Evidence of consultation**

Letters of support from industry and student feedback have highlighted the need for such a programme, which will;

- Build on existing relationships and develop cross disciplinary collaboration. A wide range of empirical partner organisations will help sustain and enrich critical dialogue, research and experimentation by artists, curators and critics
- Engage with contemporary art audiences through public events, exhibitions and publications, with the potential to offer individual post graduate students a deeper engagement with research
- Address student feedback on the demand for such a programme and build on insights gained through the significant experience of staff and students on the BA in Visual Arts Practices (VAP) and the MA in Visual Arts Practice programmes

### **Learner employment potential**

The programme will offer pathways for students to postgraduate and professional practice, working as artists, curators, critics and other opportunities in the creative and cultural industries. The programme will provide students with the opportunity to develop transferable skills such as project management, critical thinking, networking and collaborative skills.

## **Protection of learners**

Noting the long standing relationships the programme team have established to date with partners such as the Irish Museum of Modern Art and the Irish Film Institute, the Panel are of the opinion however that such links should be formalised, underpinned by a Memorandum of Understanding.

## **Quality assurance**

The Panel were satisfied the submission had been developed and approved internally, complying with the Institute's quality assurance policies and procedures, as outlined in the IADT Quality Manual. The programme document was approved in March 2014 by the Programme Validation Committee, a sub-committee of Academic Council, to go forward for external panel validation. The business model for the programme was approved by the IADT Executive on 7<sup>th</sup> April 2014.

## **Programme titles and award titles**

The Panel were not satisfied that the title of the programme is clear, accurate and fit for the purpose of informing prospective learners and other stakeholders, and consistent with QQI award titles. The panel imposed a condition on the validation of the programme, requiring the programme team to review the title.

## **Ethics**

IADT has internal policies and procedures in place to ensure that all teaching, learning or research activity across the spectrum of NFQ levels is conducted and delivered in a manner that is both morally and professionally ethical, as outlined in the IADT Ethics Policy and the IADT Learning, Teaching & Assessment Strategy.

## **Standards of Knowledge, Skill and Competence**

The programme and module learning outcomes reflect the criteria set out by the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI) framework document. After discussion with the programme team, the Panel were satisfied that the syllabi and assessment methods were fair and in line with Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) criteria for assessment of programmes, and were of the opinion that learners would be capable of attaining the standards of knowledge, skill and competence relevant to this award.

## **Teaching and learning**

The panel commended the programme team on the teaching and learning strategies embedded in the programme. This approach reflects IADT's Learning, Teaching and Assessment strategy which has three key aims: developing knowledge, skills and competencies, supporting student learning and preparing students for life after IADT. The panel noted the diverse but strategically interrelated range of teaching and learning strategies that have been devised for the modules.

## **Entry requirements**

Applicants should normally possess a minimum of second class honours or higher on a Level 8 degree programme. Those without this qualification may be considered provided they can demonstrate honours degree equivalence, which can be verified through the RPL (recognition of prior learning) process. As part of the RPL process, applicants in this category will be required to present a qualifying essay of a standard that demonstrates their ability to undertake work at MA level. Applicants must demonstrate an informed engagement with art research and identify a potential area for further study.

## **Learner assessment**

The multiple modes of assessment are guided by the IADT Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy. The programme assessment strategy has been designed so that assessment tasks are developed through constructive alignment of learning outcomes, learning and teaching strategies and assessment. Module assessment tasks have been designed so that the student will be able to demonstrate their achievement of the module Learning Outcomes. Assessment tasks will be clearly accompanied by grading schemes and communicated to students appropriately.

## **Access, transfer and progression**

The programme provides opportunities for students to develop possible PhD level proposals. In addition, parity with industry and professional standards will be ensured by in-depth and on-going engagement and dialogue with organisations such as Dublin City Council Arts Office (led by the LAB), the Irish Film Institute and the Irish Museum of Modern Art.



## Private meeting of Panel

Issues/queries noted for discussion with the programme team:

1. The document is dense and detailed; a demanding and complex academic course, and may intimidate young practitioners starting out without research experience. Words which were articulated during the discussion with the programme team are missing from the document. These include visual, installation, performance, artwork, exhibition etc. The document refers to symposiums and conferences, all of which are textual references, but students think visually also.
2. Title is problematic; QQI may also have queries around this.
3. Currently IADT only have *taught* Masters delegated authority. The way the programme is framed, it lies between a taught and research format. Programme is a hybrid, with emphasis on research. Will students think this is a research Masters?
4. A tension was identified between research and collaboration, and not completely resolved in the document.
5. Only a couple of informal partners identified; other collaborations? No formal agreements (memorandum of understanding) with partners – this raises the question of protection for learners. The panel noted museums in Ireland don't have a good understanding of the nature of formal agreements, and often see no benefit in them. This can be problematic for the college involved. A clear understanding of collaborative responsibilities is important.
6. Embedded diploma – no 'personality' all the focus is on Masters.
7. Modules for first year
8. Modules for second year
9. Students supports.

## **Panel meeting with President and Head of Faculty**

The President, Dr Annie Doona outlined the Institute's strategy in the context of recent changes in higher education; the 2011 Hunt Report, structural changes at the Institute in 2011 and the HEA Review of the Provision of Creative Arts Programmes in Dublin, 2013. IADT's position in this new landscape is augmented by the interdisciplinary portfolio of its programmes, integrating the key disciplines of the arts, design, film, digital media, entrepreneurship, technology and applied psychology. These cross disciplinary activities in the creative and cultural sector represent the unique vision and mission of IADT.

The Head of Faculty Dr Andrew Power outlined the background to developing the programme. Re-structuring within the Institute prompted a review of programmes offered at Masters Level. The old MAVIS programme fed into the development of the MA in Art Research Collaboration, and the programme team carried out a lot of research as to what was needed in the current market.

This new offering reflects the growing digital focus in arts programmes and places a stronger emphasis on research. The collaborative and research aspect overlap, and the programme should to be viewed from a research and practice perspective.

## **Panel meeting with Head of Department & Programme Team**

### **1. Structure of Document**

Panel:

While commending the quality and rigorous detail of the programme document, the Panel expressed a concern that the strong structure may be inimical to creativity and intimidating to young practitioners coming onto the programme. Young students may struggle with some of the written elements of the programme. What is not apparent in the document is the non-textual aspect, and the document is lacking the use of words such as performance, exhibition, artwork etc. While the programme team may take it for granted, the visual aspect is not so apparent in the document. Young students are hybrid and relate to visual forms as much if not more than textual; is the structure too tight to allow for innovation?

Team:

The team wanted to communicate the vision and aspiration of the programme to people outside the field of discipline, and this influenced the language of the document. Noting how much the arts landscape has changed, the team believed a re-think was required around collaborative work. The new programme is more open, and offers scope to work alongside artists in ways that are not easily specified – hence the title collaborative research.

The new roles and opportunities are moving collaborative work into new territory, and the programme team have tried to highlight the importance of practice based research, by embedding a breakdown of theory and practice in the programme. The team agreed to review the terminology in the document.

## 2. Title of Programme

Panel:

The panel had several concerns around the title; dry, the word Art lost in title, potential problem going up the ladder of awards from QQI perspective. For students clarity and appeal is important and the title should connect to what artists are excited about. The document content is heavy on the research aspect of the programme; is this apparent imbalance also reflected in the title? From a student point of view, could the title be misinterpreted as a research Masters programme?

Team:

The title of the MA in Visual Arts Practice took a while to unfold, and the team had received positive feedback to the title of the new programme. Practitioners are beginning to embrace the language of research, and are no longer defined through the specifics of their practice area.

## 3. Taught versus Research

Panel:

The programme falls between a research and taught Masters. (The panel noted the Institute currently has delegated authority for taught masters only, and can provide research Masters programmes on a case by case basis.) From a higher education and legal point of view, research is viewed as a specific type of activity; is the proposed new programme a programme by practice? Does the programme resonate more for critics and curators than practitioners?

Team:

The team confirmed it was, and was taught to practitioners. The programme is aimed at practitioner and researchers (and not art administrators for example.) First year is very structured, with a lot of student contact. A lot of students will already be shaped by an undergraduate, practice environment. The practice culture is important to the programme; people want to work alongside practitioners and also be involved in critiques and tutorials. The module 'Critical Research Methodologies' is a taught way into understanding what research means. The team will look for students to innovate research platforms under supervision. The aim is to retain this aspect.

#### 4. Collaborative/Research Tension

Panel:

The panel felt more information was needed in the document on the collaborative-research tension. How much is collaborative and how much is research? Tension in the document is implied rather than explicit.

Team:

The team want to stretch beyond the humanities research model. Students have different perspectives on collaboration and want to engage with groups and individuals; they will be asked to define their understanding of collaboration and bring their own proposals and agenda. Collaboration is a space where practice becomes key to research; a bridge between the two. The team are making an argument for a conjunction of the two; this is a new practice defined notion, and collaboration cuts against the idea of a solo research degree.

#### 5. Relationships with partners

Panel:

While the relationships with partners on the MAVIS programme grew organically on an informal basis, the new programme needs to define any partnerships clearly for students

Team:

Partnerships with LAB, IMMA and IFI will be put on a more formal basis. LAB have communicated their strategic priorities which clarifies their stance for the programme team. IMMA have carried out a review of practice, using the MAVIS programme as a model. 4<sup>th</sup> Year MAVIS students work with the collections department of IMMA, coming up with ideas on how to respond to collections for example – this was one of the seeds for the proposed new programme, and the collaborative module developed out of this. The collaborative project in 1<sup>st</sup> Year is like training, working under supervision.

#### 6. Difference between Graduate Diploma and Masters

Panel:

The Graduate Diploma aspect of the programme is lost in the document with the main focus on the Masters. Can students leave with an exit award, or is it an embedded diploma? What are the different learning outcomes? It was noted a learning outcome for the Masters is to 'predict emerging and future structures and platforms for art research' (page 15 of document) – how can prediction be assessed?

Team:

The Graduate Diploma places an emphasis on scoping out the environment. There is a lot of taught content in the diploma year with students gaining an understanding in principle of the forms, but have not yet put them into operation. The diploma will not be marketed as an embedded award, it will be an exit award. The Masters aspect is implementation year, with the project put into practice and oriented towards public outcomes.

Students will build on the first year learning outcomes, but the team stressed research cannot already know outcomes. The approach is innovative, based on an awareness of the field of research.

Panel:

The panel suggested the inclusion of a statement in the document specifying the character of the Graduate Diploma other than as a preparation for the Masters part of the programme. Indicate what the diploma can provide, in isolation.

## 7. Modules for first year

### **Thematic Seminar (page 43).**

Panel:

How do the team balance serving the needs of industry, and stimulating student growth to meet personal creative challenges rather than the public aspect?

Team:

The module grounds students in analysing industry areas that they will be involved in, and understanding how they operate. Students will be critically informed and develop new approaches to the public aspect, but they will not be asked to re-produce something for industry. Current enquiry around what is the public aspect/perception of IMMA etc. and there is good scope for dynamic dialogue around these questions.

### **Critical Research: Foundations, Futures and Skills (page 39).**

Panel:

How does this process help students to develop skills?

Team:

Critical Research is a foundation, where students step outside their own discipline to understand research better. This is a shared module, which opens up awareness to other research methodologies and empirical skills. Students are asked to identify their research strategies, and will study with students studying on other programmes. This module is already in-house at IADT, and was amended to accommodate a wider research culture.

**Research & Practice Review (page 48).**

Team:

This module operates alongside Critical Research and this gives students an introduction into a wide range of research fields. There is a lot of input from staff in Psychology and the new programme team. Students have prepared research methods at undergraduate level, in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of BA in Visual Arts Practice.

Panel:

The panel noted the indicative content of Critical Research module was not far away from broader research, but was different to the Research & Practice Review module.

Team:

The team explained the Critical Research module is individual to a student's own practice. The modules run parallel to each other, and the indicative content gives an in-depth understanding and continuity for academics, particularly for new staff. The ratio is 100 hour input for 5 credits, based on 120 hours per year. The Institute is at the lower end of the European norm, which is 120/130 hours.

Panel:

In relation to the learning outcomes for the Research & Practice Review module, the panel noted if a student exits the programme at diploma level, they won't realise the ultimate outcomes of this module.

Team:

While this may apply to some students, the cohort will be working as a group to test learning outcomes.

Panel:

The panel commended the team on the repeat assessment approach outlined in the document.

**Collaborative Project (page 41).**

Panel:

Regarding relationships, currently informal, are they sustainable and reliable over time? Will students have enough opportunities with partners? Do partners have an input into assessments if live/theoretical?

Team:

The team are conscious the three partners have different levels of interest. The Collaborative Project specifically happens with IMMA and 12 students, providing a lot of opportunity for learners.

The team have letters of support at senior levels, and the partners have different emphasis on why they want to be involved with IADT.

The IFI recognise it as an opportunity to communicate to a particular group who can provide feedback.

Students on the MAVIS programme have a long standing relationship with the collections and education department of IMMA. The team are keen to keep the structure open for future collaborations, share information with partners, and are confident a more formal Memorandum of Understanding will not be a problem. Currently the Faculty has a Memorandum of Understanding with Wexford Opera. In second year, students are encouraged to look for other partners. For this module, students don't all do something in a group sense, but will identify skill sets and interests such as curating, documentary etc.

The shape of the event will change each year, so the outcomes can also be different. In summary, this is a group event with individual contribution; students get an individual mark and a team mark. Peer assessment is part of the process.

#### 8. Modules for second year

##### **Research & Collaborative Project (page 51).**

Panel:

This module has a pre-requisite in 1<sup>st</sup> year. The panel suggested the visual richness of the module should be spelled out more clearly for students. The language in this module indicates self-directed work, yet the title uses the term collaborative?

Team:

The 2<sup>nd</sup> year plan could be diagrams and not simply a textual proposal. The plan should show how to devise the formats; this could perhaps be more articulated in the document, with indicative content embedded in the descriptor. The work is self-directed from an individual point of view.

##### **Major Project (page 53).**

Panel:

Indicative assessment strategies outline 50% for documented intention and 50% for actual piece – rationale?

Team:

The 50/50 assessment strategy is a requirement for the public outcome. The team acknowledged the Major Project could also be longer than the public outcome; this could be made more explicit in the document.

Each student develops responsibility for their part of the project; a series of outcomes are needed, that realise research strategies developed in the earlier research plan. This should have a publishable outcome – an event, exhibition, or even a basis for a PhD proposal.

This will have a structured public presentation (one of the key skills) and will justify the outcomes and formats.

Panel:

What is the role of the External Examiner to the Major Project, given that the work may be complex and not a straightforward viva or exhibition piece?

Team:

An external examiner is involved; this method was developed with MAVIS students, as people work in different ways. Students can have different public outcomes, but they all develop an ability to understand the alignment of strategies and objectives in relation to their work. It is not only the outcome which is relevant, but how it was devised.

Students meet the external examiner in first and second year; this way the examiner has a sense of how the student developed the project from the start, and has a role in the assessment of the work. The 2<sup>nd</sup> year supervisor also keeps in contact with the student, acting like a mentor.

Panel:

How do the team get the students they want – learners may have a different agenda? Outcomes change, and how to validate some forms is a grey area?

Team:

There is no requirement to make an exhibition. The form of the project is open, but there is a requirement to manifest the work publicly in some way; a talk, event etc. It is a question of devising the appropriate format for the outcomes. Students need a space to create, where they are not asked to reproduce, and are able to open their research outwards.

Panel:

Where is the preparation for entrepreneurship and communication?

Team:

The first year module Thematic Seminar (page 45) provides a lot of case studies across a broad range of economies.

## 9. Student Supports

Panel:

Students are not on IADT campus for most of the programme – how will student supports, mentoring etc. be facilitated?

Team:

Critical Research in 1<sup>st</sup> year is taught on campus and develops a research community, while identifying what kind of resources are needed, i.e. a bookable space. Students are also inducted into campus facilities that are available; pastoral care, medical, reading/writing skills etc.



## Decision of the panel

The panel recommended (subject to the condition outlined below) the validation of the proposed programme to IADT Academic Council, namely:

Code		Description	Credits
DLTBC		MA in Art Research Collaboration (TBC)	120
DLTBC		Postgraduate Diploma in Art Research Collaboration (TBC)	60
Validation Date		Thursday 8 <sup>th</sup> May 2014	

## Condition

This validation of the programme is subject to the following condition:

### 1. Title of programme:

While the panel were sensitive to the team's defence of the current title, the panel did not support this view, and require the programme team to review the current proposal. The panel are of the opinion that it will cause problems going forward; students may not understand this is a taught programme as opposed to a Masters by Research, the title does not reflect the excitement and innovation of the programme, and QQI may raise questions around the descriptor.

## Panel recommendations

The panel made the following series of recommendations for the consideration of the programme team:

1. The panel recommend clear description in the document of the Postgraduate Diploma. Indicate more precisely the character of the Postgraduate Diploma and the stand-alone outcomes.
2. The panel recommend the team review the language used in the document around the creativity and innovation of the programme; contextualise the textual aspects such as conferences, and include more description of the visual aspect. Overall re-think the strong textual focus of the document and represent more precisely what is offered on the programme.

3. The panel recommends the Institute formalise relationships with partners such as IMMA, IFI etc. and devise a collaborative policy going forward. A flexible approach to this should future proof the programme delivery.
4. The panel recommend the range of artistic practice the programme is open to, should be reflected in the document.
5. The panel recommend highlighting the communication and entrepreneurship aspects of the programme more explicitly in the document.
6. In summary, the panel recommend the team review the document and re-balance the focus and enthusiasm for the programme.

**In summing up,** on behalf of the panel the Chair thanked the President of IADT and the programme team for the quality of engagement during the process, and extended the panel's high regard for the team's vision for the programme which came across in the discussion.

The Panel were happy to recommend the programmes – both the Graduate Diploma (as an exit award) and the Masters for validation to the Academic Council of IADT, subject to the single condition outlined above.

## **Panel signatures**

### **Chairperson**

Dr Joseph Ryan \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### **Registrar**

Dr Marian O'Sullivan \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**September 2014:**  
**Update on panel recommendation regarding title of programme.**

The proposed revised title for the new MA programme is:  
"MA in Art and Research Collaboration"

The view of the team is that this revised title prioritises Art as a clearly recognisable practice form while 'Research Collaboration' emphasises the interconnection between research and collaboration, which is distinctive to this programme.

The panel Chair and panel members approved the revised title.