

New Programme (Major Award) External Validation Report

Section A

Report of the External Review Panel

Programme Reference Number:	43
Faculty/School(s):	Science
Department(s):	Nursing and Healthcare

Details of Programme(s) Reviewed

Title:	Master of Science in Gerontology Nursing Master of Science in Gerontology Practice
Type of Award:	Masters Degree
NFQ (National Framework of Qualifications) Level:	9
ECTS:	90
ISCED:	0913
Duration:	2 years
Proposed Student Intake:	20
Proposed Start Date:	September 2024
Delivery Mode(s):	Full-time, Part-time

Title:	Postgraduate Diploma in Science in Gerontology Nursing Postgraduate Diploma in Science in Gerontology Practice
Type of Award:	Postgraduate Diploma
NFQ Level:	9
ECTS:	60
ISCED:	0913
Duration:	3 Semesters
Proposed Student Intake:	20
Proposed Start Date:	September 2024
Delivery Mode(s):	Full-time, Part-time

Title:	Postgraduate Certificate in Contemporary Healthcare Management
Type of Award:	Postgraduate Certificate
NFQ Level:	9
ECTS:	30
ISCED:	0913
Duration:	3 Semesters

Proposed Student Intake:	20
Proposed Start Date:	September 2024
Delivery Mode(s):	Full-time, Part-time

Title:	Ageing, Health Assessment and Management in the Older Person Contemporary Approaches to Care of the Older Person Delirium, Dementia and Mental Health in the Older Person
Type of Award:	Micro-credential
NFQ Level:	9
ECTS:	10
ISCED:	0913
Duration:	1 Semester
Proposed Student Intake:	20
Proposed Start Date:	September 2024
Delivery Mode(s):	Full-time, Part-time

Date of Review:	17 th May 2024
------------------------	---------------------------

Review Panel

Panellist Role	Name	Organisation & Role
Chair	Ms Marianne Moutray	Former Associate Dean Queens University Belfast
External Academic Discipline Expert	Dr Myles Hackett	Head of Department, DKIT
External Academic Discipline Expert	Dr Eileen Carey	Associate Professor, UL
Industry/ Community Representative	Mr John G Kelly	Older Person Services, Retired Director Private Nursing Home Group
Student Representative	Mr Agni Paul	ATU, Donegal
Vice President for Academic Affairs and Registrar (VPAAR) Nominee (Academic Secretary)	Ms Carmel Brennan	Secretary to Panel/Assistant Registrar

All external members of the panel have declared that they are independent of ATU (Atlantic Technological University), and all have declared that they have no conflict of interest.

Programme Design Team

The panel met the staff listed below during the review process.

- Dr Joanne Gallagher, Head of Faculty of Science and Health, ATU Donegal
- Dr Louise McBride, Head of Department of Nursing and Health Care, ATU Donegal
- Ms Dymrna O'Connell ATU, St Angelas, Sligo - Curriculum Lead
- Ms Mary Dunnion. Lecturer, ATU Donegal

- Dr Margaret Prendergast, Lecturer, ATU Galway Mayo

Introduction

The number and the proportion of persons aged 65 years and over in Ireland is increasing and is projected to continue an upward trend over the next three decades with this cohort projected to double to 1.6 million people by 2051 (CSO, 2022). Current models of health and social care delivery need to keep pace with changing population demographics and take cognisance of the factors which determine successful ageing. Government strategy places a focus on increasing specialist knowledge within multidisciplinary teams in health and social care to provide services to the older person.

The ATU Masters in Gerontology has been developed in response to significant policy and societal changes which impact the lives and wellbeing of older people, how they are cared for and who cares for them. This programme aims to produce graduates who can make a meaningful contribution to the health and social care of older people, their supporters, and the wider community. At the heart of this programme is an approach which values the uniqueness of the person irrespective of their health status and a focus on empowering older people as partners in creating and maintaining health and wellbeing in an integrated way.

The core purpose of the programme is to provide highly skilled, empathetic, engaged graduates who are ready to positively contribute to the care and welfare of older people and ready to address the health and social care needs of older persons within a multi-agency and evolving care environment. It is designed to meet the needs of a dynamic and diverse workforce with a focus on knowledge development and enhancement, skills development, and relationship-based practice.

This 90ECTS programme is delivered over two years part time and one year fulltime. In the part-time mode, students undertake three 10 ECTS core modules and three 10 ECTS gerontology specialist modules over semesters 1, 2 and 3. A further 30 ECTS Research Dissertation Practicum module is taken over semester 3-4. Students undertaking the programme in a full-time mode will complete all modules over semester 1 and 2. This is a multidisciplinary programme. Registered nurses who successfully complete the programme will gain the Gerontology Nursing award. Students who are allied health and social care professionals will receive the Gerontology Practice award. Students must be in employment for the duration of the programme in a care of the older person setting.

There is no difference in the content of the Master of Science in Gerontology Nursing and Master of Science in Gerontology Practice. However, nurses undertaking the programme must practice in a nursing context in a care of the older person setting and allied health or social care professionals must work in an allied health or social care context in a care of the older person setting.

Allied Health or Social Care Professionals	Nurses
Master of Science in Gerontology Practice	Master of Science in Gerontology Nursing
Postgraduate Diploma in Science in Gerontology Practice	Postgraduate Diploma in Science in Gerontology Nursing
Postgraduate Certificate in Contemporary Healthcare Management	Postgraduate Certificate in Contemporary Healthcare Management

Students undertaking the Masters programme may exit the programme as follows:

- Certificate in Contemporary Healthcare Management (30 ECTS)
- Postgraduate Diploma in Gerontology Nursing OR Postgraduate Diploma in Gerontology Practice (60 ECTS)

Embedded exit award: Micro-credentials are set out below:

- Ageing, Health Assessment and Management in the Older Person (10 ECTS)
- Contemporary Approaches to Care of the Older Person (10 ECTS)
- Delirium, Dementia and Mental Health in the Older Person (10 ECTS)

See Appendix for Entry Requirements, Programme Learning Outcomes and Approved Programme Schedule.

Rationale for Programme(s)

To develop an environment for ageing well, we need to characterise the older Irish citizen and explore factors which determine successful ageing. We need to plan appropriate health, medical, social, and economic policies. A Master's in Gerontology is reflective of the specialist discipline of older persons care, services, and healthcare provision. This programme aims to create an environment to nurture and foster adult learners to integrate knowledge and skills that will positively impact on gerontology practices and ultimately provide high quality evidenced-based care to the older population. Currently, there is no existing gerontology specific programme in the North-West region. Currently, there is no existing postgraduate programme with a health and social care multidisciplinary team's focus.

The population aged 65 or over in ROI was estimated to have reached 696,300 in 2019 (CSO) and the projected number of people aged 65+ will double to almost 1.6 million in ROI by 2051 (26% of the population (CSO). Population growth and increased life expectancy has seen rising numbers of older people living with complex needs. Rising incidence of dementia, chronic disease, and other co-morbidities, combine to create escalating demand for all health and social care services (Slaintecare and HSE 2020). Government strategy places a focus on increasing specialist knowledge within multidisciplinary teams in health and social care to provide services to the older person, including specific areas such as stroke, frailty, and dementia care. In response to government strategy, the HSE has developed the Enhanced Community Care (ECC) Programme, and this includes the establishment of 30 Community Specialist Teams for Older Persons. The 2,400 health and social care workers recruited for this programme will require further training in older person care (OPC). This signifies an

increasing demand for highly skilled specialist nurses and multidisciplinary practitioners in the discipline of Gerontology with relevant M.Sc. level 9 qualification requirements. Moreover, it is highly applicable to Allied healthcare professionals and practitioners working in older services.

Government funding is becoming available for nurses working in the private nursing home sector to undertake further professional and academic development in the discipline of care of the older person. Leading Healthcare Provider Skillnet, as the distributor of this funding, is seeking to partner with one or more 3rd level Higher Education institutes to deliver a Postgraduate Diploma in Gerontology Nursing specifically to learners from the private nursing home sector. This initiative, fully funded by the Department of Health, aims to support nursing homes to build nurse expertise in the field of gerontology. This initiative plans to provide 1 place on the Diploma course for every private nursing home in the country (ca.410). Funding has been approved and allocated to support the first 205 nursing homes in 2024. The second 205 nursing homes will be supported in 2025 subject to the success of year 1 and availability of funding (approved in principle). The programme development team for this programme have submitted a tender application for an allocation of part of this funding.

Validation Criteria

ATU's Developing and Validating New Taught Programmes Policy specifies that new programmes must comply with the following criteria for validation:

1. The programme aims and learning outcomes are clear and aligned with the proposed award title.
2. The rationale for the programme is well informed and justified.
3. The design of the programme is suitably structured and fit for purpose.
4. The design of the programme ensures that students can successfully achieve the Programme Learning Outcomes.
5. The teaching, learning and assessment strategy is well planned and appropriate for the discipline area and type of award.
6. Assessment techniques are fair, valid, reliable, consistent and a credible measure of the academic standard attained by students.
7. The planned resources, including staff, physical, online, library and student supports, sufficiently support the teaching, learning and assessment strategy for the programme.
8. The programme facilitates lifelong learning for a diverse student population by setting out appropriate entry requirements and opportunities for access, transfer, and progression.
9. There is demand for potential graduates from the programme.
10. The learning environment and mode of delivery are consistent with the needs of the intended students of the programme and accessible and appropriate support services for students have been provided for.
11. Students will be well informed on the requirements of the programme, guided to relevant resources and supported in their studies in a caring environment.

Findings

Overall Finding

Validated without changes	
Validated subject to condition(s) and/or recommendation(s)	X
Rejected	

Reason for Overall Finding

The panel reviewed the programmes and micro-credentials presented and deem that they meet ATU's validation criteria subject to the conditions and recommendations outlined below.

Commendations

The Validation Panel advises Academic Council of the following commendations.

1. The Programme Development Team provided the panel with a well presented and easy to read document comprehensively outlining the proposed programme.
2. The programme meets an important need in healthcare given Ireland's aging population.
3. The flexible design of the programme with multiple exit points including micro-credentials is student-friendly given the target cohort.

Conditions

The Validation Panel advises Academic Council that subject to satisfying any condition(s) detailed below, the panel is satisfied that the proposed programme(s) meets the validation criteria as set out in Atlantic Technological University's Developing and Validating New Programmes Policy.

1. Review Entry Requirements and Access Routes to ensure that they are clear and specific. Specifically, remove the term 'normally' in reference to mandatory requirements, ensure that the minimum experience requirement is expressed consistently and clarify the RPL process and requirements for anyone not meeting standard entry requirements (removing reference to 10 ECTS at level 9). Ensure that entry requirements allow for nurses registered with equivalents of NMBI and allied health professionals registered with equivalents of CORU, thus allowing applicants from Northern Ireland. Ensure that the term candidate/applicant is used instead of student throughout the minimum entry requirements section. Remove reference to advanced entry.
2. Students being admitted to the programme need to have a signed statement from the service manager agreeing to provide appropriately qualified mentors and suitable learning experiences for students, and to support students with evidence-based practice. This agreement should be part of the entry criteria for the masters, the postgraduate diploma, and the micro-credentials.
3. A clear and explicit guideline needs to be developed for the operationalisation of the portfolio. This should include mechanisms to ensure consistency of mentoring and marking.

Recommendations

The panel advises Academic Council that the Programme Development Team and/or the Department should take cognisance of any recommendations outlined below.

1. Ensure that the balance of the programme is not overly directed towards nursing, and that there is explicit consideration towards the diverse student body targeted.
2. Ensure all relevant strategies and policies relevant to the older adult population are referenced in the document.
3. Consider packaging the three specialist modules as a minor award further enhancing student flexibility.
4. Clarify the timing of the dissertation for both full and part-time delivery, clarifying that the full-time masters is 12 months in duration. The diagrams in the document should be updated in this regard.
5. Review the practice working hours requirements ensuring that they are appropriate and achievable for all sectors.
6. Consider whether there should be special regulations on timelines for students returning to the programme and the number of micro-credentials someone can complete prior to having to register on the major award.
7. Consider including a physical assessment skills component/module within the programme.
8. Ensure that the programme assessment strategy provides for a variety of assessments to implement the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), and that the commitment to UDL evident in the document is also evident in the module assessment strategies.
9. Ensure that students are supplied with a programme handbook outlining the programme learning outcomes, teaching and assessment strategy, structure, content, regulations, and approved programme schedule. The programme handbook should be clear on student use of artificial intelligence in their assessments, and include sections on academic integrity, external examination, student attendance and practice requirements. It should also include reference to vetting requirements for undertaking small scale research as part of the dissertation.
10. Review the reading lists considering the major subject area, ensuring that all are appropriate. Include relevant journals available to students in the list of module resources.
11. Terminology used in the document should be clear and consistent. Include a glossary of terms used and review the document to ensure consistency of terminology e.g. intellectual disability, Departments, postgraduate programmes. Use the term 'Older Person' consistently throughout the document rather than 'elderly' or 'patient'. Proofread and edit the document to remove any typos.

Report Approval

This report has been agreed by the review panel and is signed on their behalf by the chairperson.

Signed: <i>Marianne Moutray</i> Name Ms Marianne Moutray Validation Panel Chair	Date 22 May 2024
--	------------------