



## EYE' on Waterford IT

### WIT : DEVELOPMENT OF A COLLABORATE PG PROGRAMME WITH WEXFORD AND KILKENNY TEACHER'S CENTRES

WIT was one of the first Irish third level institutions to establish an academic Department of Adult and Continuing Education to cater for the needs of mature learners accessing third level and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) courses. WIT's School of Education and Professional Development was established in 2004 to build on the success of the Department in championing and mainstreaming a number of innovative education initiatives. Such initiatives include the development of postgraduate courses for education professionals, development of foundation courses for mature learners, provision of adult educational guidance and counselling services, development of accredited courses in partnership with community/voluntary groups and the recognition of prior and experiential learning.

The School of Education is focused on becoming a leader in the provision of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in education, community education, adult literacy, adult education, CPD and work-based learning. The School has developed a number of postgraduate courses aimed at teaching professionals namely:

- Masters in Management in Education (delivered in blended mode)
- Postgraduate Diploma/Masters in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (delivered to WIT, LIT and IT Sligo lecturing and a broader student cohort)
- Postgraduate Diploma/Masters in Science Education (Primary Science)
- Higher Diploma in Social, Personal and Health Education
- Masters in Social, Personal and Health Education

One exciting development, currently being formulated is a collaborate approach to deliver postgraduate learning opportunities to teachers in collaboration with Wexford and Kilkenny Teacher Centres.

"Using a blended learning approach, the proposed programme will be delivered in WIT and in an outreach mode in both Wexford and Kilkenny", according to Mary Fenton, Head of Department of Adult and Continuing Education.

"This offers an exciting opportunity to leverage the expertise within WIT to address in a partnership approach the needs as identified by the managers of the training centres in Wexford and Kilkenny. The use of a blended learning approach will offer greater flexibility to participants, allowing them to build up a portfolio of modules that can lead to a postgraduate qualification", added Mary Fenton.

**For further details, contact Mary Fenton, Department of Adult and Continuing Education, Email: [mfenton@wit.ie](mailto:mfenton@wit.ie)**

### WIT : A UNIQUE ASPECT OF THE BA (HONS) PROGRAMME: INTERDISCIPLINARITY

A unique feature of this course is that students will undertake interdisciplinary modules in their chosen Major and minor subjects. These modules will forge both theoretical and practical linkages between the two subject domains. A strong interdisciplinary component in higher education is important for a number of reasons. Getting into the habit of drawing connections among ideas, concepts, theories, assumptions, instruments, media, practices, histories and mindsets associated with different disciplinary paradigms is not only intellectually challenging and rewarding, but also profoundly useful in a practical sense. 'Real world' problems are nearly always multifaceted and interconnected. To solve such problems effectively, one needs to have an interdisciplinary mind that is well equipped with knowledge, cognitive skills and the ability to see the bigger picture. Applying narrow and specialised solutions to 'real world' problems can set off unexpected consequences and create other, perhaps worse problems. The most effective strategy for an interdisciplinary module is to organise the course material around a single concept, problem or issue that can be interrogated broadly using specific analytical tools and assumptions from different disciplinary paradigms. The content of such modules should be treated mainly as raw material for analysis, not as primary matter to be mastered by students. It is more important to give students a sense of the academic terrain, on which lie similarities, interconnections, interpretations and even hybrid formations among the disciplines.

Interdisciplinary learning requires and promotes an adventuresome mind that is willing and able to proceed from the familiar into the unfamiliar, while trying to make sense of new situations by critically applying all the knowledge one possesses. To achieve this, it is important to get to know one's students well so that their diverse backgrounds and personal interests can be used to generate problems and contradictions for interdisciplinary debate.



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Using student debates designed to help them articulate the kinds of arguments that one might expect from different intellectual disciplines is one effective way of 'demonstrating' the logics of interdisciplinary thinking. Secondly, experiential exercises are also effective not only to promote active learning, but also to ensure that students arrive at a critical understanding of the various concepts and ideas. Both, these approaches, debate and experiential exercises will be utilised extensively in the proposed interdisciplinary modules.

The Learning Outcomes expected of a graduate of a level 8 programme on the National Framework of Qualifications suggest that an Honours degree graduate should be able to "exercise appropriate judgment in a number of complex planning, design, technical and/or management functions related to products, services, operations or processes, including resourcing"; "use advanced skills to conduct research, or advanced technical or professional activity, accepting accountability for all related decision making; transfer and apply diagnostic and creative skills in a range of contexts"; and "learn to act in variable and unfamiliar learning contexts; learn to manage learning tasks independently, professionally and ethically", amongst others. The inclusion of interdisciplinary modules will assist in realising better these learning outcomes.

**These interdisciplinary modules are a significant curriculum development for this programme, the school of Humanities and WIT as a whole, and will also create a distinctive approach to the integrated study of Humanities, Social Studies and Arts as Major and Minor subjects chosen by the prospective student. For further details, contact Dr. Michael Howlett Department of Applied Arts, Email: [mhowlett@wit.ie](mailto:mhowlett@wit.ie)**

## WIT : INDUSTRY ACADEMIA PARTNERSHIP IN CONSTRUCTION CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Ireland's premier construction group has teamed up with Waterford Institute of Technology to invest in its people by developing the skills needed to challenge Ireland's current difficult construction market, and also meet the new, public construction contract conditions.

Bam Contractors, together with Waterford Institute of Technology, is investing in the future, preparing for a market upturn when it comes and is ensuring graduates coming through the ground-breaking joint partnership Masters programme have the expertise required for the future.

"The WIT Bam Contractors MSc in Construction Project Management (CPM) is a first in construction executive education in Ireland and will inspire our project management talent ensuring we continue to deliver successful projects to our clients", Bam Contractors Managing Director, Brendan Barrett, explained at the launch on the 19<sup>th</sup> September 2008.

"Industry, academia and management science have fused to produce this precedent setting innovation in learning. It represents a true investment in the belief that people are our most important asset. This is a good news story; it is an investment in innovation, in people, in the industry and ultimately in the future of Ireland," Mr Barrett added.

The new programme at WIT is also supported by Skillnets, an enterprise-led support body whose mission is to enhance the skills of people in employment in Irish industry and to support competitiveness and employability.

The Masters programme is industry driven and focused, according to CPM Programme Director, John Wall. "This postgraduate programme uses 'blended learning', where technology and traditional modes of delivery are effectively merged.

"Complimenting the general MSc in Construction Project Management, Bam Contractors educational specialists, working with WIT, have developed a bespoke version of the programme tailored to their operations."

The 20 participants selected by the company are a mix of civil engineers, quantity surveyors and project managers, said Dr Ken Thomas, Head of the Department of Construction & Civil Engineering at WIT.

"Courage, vision and leadership are required to make a financial outlay in an industry that is currently undergoing a traumatic downturn and the associated cost reduction programmes that go with that.

"Not only is the MSc in Construction Project Management unique in Ireland, the bespoke version that has been developed is also a significant new development within the Irish construction industry.

"The development and the delivery of the programme has been, and will continue to be, a genuine partnership between WIT and Bam Contractors. The participants in the programme will not only get the opportunity to review theory and practice relating to Construction Project Management (Irish & global) but they will also be encouraged to reflect on their role with Bam Contractors." Dr Thomas added.



## 'EYE' on WIT

### WIT : TEACHING AND LEARNING

The programme is delivered through a blend of traditional methods (lectures, workshops, seminars, tutorials, projects) and e-learning. Students will typically be required to attend WIT for 15 days during the year on 6 occasions of 2 or 3 days duration (all day Thursday & Friday and some Saturday mornings). Students also use the Institute's Learning Management System and engage in online interaction. The teaching of some modules is supplemented by problem-based material that enables a more flexible and bespoke teaching and learning experience.



From Left to Right: Brendan Barrett, Managing Director BAM Contractors, Emma Ryan, participant on the programme and Dr. Ken Thomas, Head of Department, Construction and Civil Engineering

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