



Beschluss zur Akkreditierung

der Studiengänge

- „Digital Media“ (B.A.)
- „Leadership in the Creative Industries“ (M.A.)

an der Hochschule Darmstadt (in Kooperation mit dem Cork Institute of Technology)

Auf der Basis des Berichts der Gutachtergruppe und der Beratungen der Akkreditierungskommission in der 51. Sitzung vom 13./14.05.2013 spricht die Akkreditierungskommission folgende Entscheidungen aus:

1. Der Studiengang „**Digital Media**“ mit dem Abschluss „**Bachelor of Arts**“ an der **Hochschule Darmstadt** in Kooperation mit dem **Cork Institute of Technology** wird unter Berücksichtigung der „Regeln des Akkreditierungsrates für die Akkreditierung von Studiengängen und für die Systemakkreditierung“ (Beschluss des Akkreditierungsrates vom 23.02.2012) mit Auflagen akkreditiert.

Der Studiengang entspricht grundsätzlich den Kriterien des Akkreditierungsrates für die Akkreditierung von Studiengängen, den Anforderungen der Ländergemeinsamen Strukturvorgaben der Kultusministerkonferenz, den landesspezifischen Strukturvorgaben für die Akkreditierung von Bachelor- und Masterstudiengängen sowie den Anforderungen des Qualifikationsrahmens für deutsche Hochschulabschlüsse in der aktuell gültigen Fassung. Die im Verfahren festgestellten Mängel sind durch die Hochschule innerhalb von neun Monaten behebbar.

2. Der Studiengang „**Leadership in the Creative Industries**“ mit dem Abschluss „**Master of Arts**“ an der **Hochschule Darmstadt** in Kooperation mit dem **Cork Institute of Technology** wird unter Berücksichtigung der „Regeln des Akkreditierungsrates für die Akkreditierung von Studiengängen und für die Systemakkreditierung“ (Beschluss des Akkreditierungsrates vom 23.02.2012) mit Auflagen akkreditiert.

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Es handelt sich um einen **konsekutiven** Masterstudiengang. Die Akkreditierungskommission stellt ein **stärker anwendungsorientiertes** Profil fest.

3. Die Akkreditierung wird mit den unten genannten Auflagen verbunden. Die Auflagen sind umzusetzen. Die Umsetzung der Auflagen ist schriftlich zu dokumentieren und AQAS spätestens **bis zum 28.02.2014** anzuzeigen.
4. Die Akkreditierung wird für eine **Dauer von sieben Jahren** (unter Berücksichtigung des vollen zuletzt betroffenen Studienjahres) ausgesprochen und ist unter Anrechnung der vorläufigen Akkreditierung gemäß Beschluss der Akkreditierungskommission vom 20./21.08.2012 **gültig bis zum 30.09.2019**.

Studiengangsübergreifende Auflagen:

- I.1 Es muss ein Konzept vorgelegt werden, wie die gemeinsamen Elemente der Studiengänge („Culture of Jointness“) gestärkt werden können. Dazu gehört auch, dass der Aufenthalt der Studierenden an der Partnerinstitution einen substantiellen Anteil am jeweiligen Studiengang darstellt.
- I.2 Die Kooperationsvereinbarung zur Vergabe des Abschlussgrads zwischen Quality and Qualifications Ireland, Hochschule Darmstadt und Cork Institute of Technology muss als ein von allen Beteiligten ratifiziertes Dokument vorgelegt werden.

Auflage zum Bachelorstudiengang „Digital Media“:

- II.1 Die Vermittlung von Grundlagen des Projektmanagements muss im Modulhandbuch dokumentiert werden.

Die Auflagen beziehen sich auf im Verfahren festgestellte Mängel hinsichtlich der Erfüllung der Kriterien des Akkreditierungsrates zur Akkreditierung von Studiengängen i. d. F. vom 23.02.2012.

Zur Weiterentwicklung der Studiengänge werden die folgenden **Empfehlungen** gegeben:

- III.1 Es sollte dokumentiert und evaluiert werden, warum Studierende über die Regelstudienzeit hinaus ihr Studium verlängern. Aus den Ergebnissen dieser Evaluation sollten ggf. Maßnahmen abgeleitet werden.
- III.2 Im gemeinsamen Koordinierungsausschuss sollten Studierende vertreten sein.

Zur Weiterentwicklung des Masterstudiengangs „**Leadership in the Creative Industries**“ wird die folgende **Empfehlung** gegeben:

- IV.1 Die deutsche Studiengangsbezeichnung sollte der irischen entsprechen.

Zur weiteren Begründung dieser Entscheidungen verweist die Akkreditierungskommission auf das Gutachten, das diesem Beschluss als Anlage beiliegt.



Experts' Report

on the joint degree programmes:

- “BA Digital Media” / “BA Multimedia” / “BA (Hon) Multimedia”
- “MA Leadership in the Creative Industries” / “MA Media Design”

offered by Hochschule Darmstadt – Darmstadt University of Applied Sciences – (Dieburg Campus) and Cork Institute of Technology

Visit to Dieburg on 21 March 2013

Experts:

Prof. Björn Bartholdy

Cologne University of Applied Sciences, Köln International School of Design

Maria Puhmann

Berlin University of Applied Sciences for Technology and Economics (student representative)

Antares Reisky

Managing Director advise+, Hamburg (representative of professional practice)

Tara Ryan

Educational Partnerships & Student Services Manager, Dún Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology

Coordinator:

Birgit Kraus

AQAS, Cologne



AQAS

Agentur für Qualitätssicherung durch
Akkreditierung von
Studiengängen

Preliminary remarks

The German accreditation process validates bachelor and master programmes of public as well as private higher education institutions. According to the *Common Structural Guidelines of the Länder*, the accreditation of bachelor and master programmes is obligatory; Länder-specific regulations for higher education institutions might have different conditions for the accreditation and introduction of study programmes, though.

The programmes presented in this accreditation process are joint degrees, offered by Hochschule Darmstadt – Darmstadt University of Applied Sciences (Germany) at the Dieburg Campus and Cork Institute of Technology (Ireland). The Irish awarding and validating body formerly Higher Education Training and Awards Council (HETAC) – now Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) – has delegated authority to Cork Institute of Technology for the validation of its non-joint programmes only. Therefore, AQAS appointed an expert review panel, in consultation with QQI, for the review and reaccreditation of the programmes (three bachelor programmes, two master programmes) which lead to joint awards of QQI and Hochschule Darmstadt. The findings of the review will be considered by AQAS for the reaccreditation purposes of the programmes and by QQI for the validation of the programmes leading to the joint awards.

The accreditation of the programmes took place in line with the “Rules for the Accreditation of Study Programmes and for System Accreditation of the Accreditation Council”, last amended on February 23rd 2012. Information and experts’ evaluation are based on the self-report provided by Hochschule Darmstadt and the visit to Dieburg. The Irish criteria for the validation of study programmes were also taken into consideration, in order that one agreed and joint process, could address the criteria of all responsible bodies. With regard to the programmes provided at Cork Institute of Technology (BA Multimedia and MA Media Design), the panel is confident in relying on the findings of the 2010 review of those programmes as ‘non-joint awards’, conducted under the HEI’s delegated authority, which was presented to the panel of experts of this accreditation process. Therefore, the AQAS-appointed expert panel has not revisited the findings of the CIT-appointed panel and the associated CIT response.

1. General Information

Since 1999, Hochschule Darmstadt – Darmstadt University of Applied Sciences – and Cork Institute of Technology (CIT) have cooperated in the provision of programmes in the field of Media Studies. In March 2007, the Irish Higher Education Training and Awards Council (HETAC) – now Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) – and AQAS accredited the programmes provided by both HEIs as joint degrees. The German part is offered on the so called “Media Campus in Dieburg. These programmes are for consideration for reaccreditation in the present process.

The degrees awarded concern programmes which have different names at each HEI. A Joint Awarding Agreement between the two awarding bodies, Hochschule Darmstadt and QQI, with the provider CIT shall regulate the responsibilities of the partners and the conditions, under which degrees are awarded. A further legal agreement (Consortium Agreement) solely between the two providers, Hochschule Darmstadt and CIT, is supposed to provide details on their respective responsibilities and the quality assurance arrangements in place.

The following are the degree programmes:

Hochschule Darmstadt	Cork Institute of Technology
BA Digital Media (7 semesters)	BA Multimedia (7 semesters)
	BA (Hons) Multimedia (8 semesters)
MA Leadership in the Creative Industries (3 semesters)	MA Media Design (2 semesters)

According to the Irish Qualification Framework the BA Multimedia corresponds to level 7, the BA (Hons) Multimedia to level 8 and the MA Media Design to level 9. Both level 7 and 8 correspond to the German bachelor's degree defined by the German Qualification Framework, level 9 is equivalent to the German mbachelor programme's degree.

Those students who have successfully completed the seventh semester (in their relevant programme) receive the German bachelor's degree "Digital Media" and the Irish bachelor's degree "Multimedia" manifested in a single diploma (the joint award). Those students who have successfully completed the eighth semester are awarded the German bachelor's degree "Digital Media" and the Irish Bachelor of Honors degree "Multimedia". Students who integrate two more semesters of studies receive the German master's degree "Leadership in the Creative Industries" and the Irish master's degree "Media Design", again manifested in a single diploma (joint award).

When the programmes were accredited for the first time in 2007, the German concept of a six-semester bachelor's degree and a four-semester master's degree was linked to the Irish concept, which consisted of an eight-semester bachelor's degree and a two-semester master's degree. For the following accreditation period the German concept at Hochschule Darmstadt has been transformed, so that it consists of seven-semester bachelor's degree and a three-semester master's degree.

According to the self-report, 53 German and 56 Irish students have spent a semester abroad at the partner institution during the past ten years. Compatibility of both programme and classes is assured by a Joint Management Board. Each HEI is responsible for its own degree programmes.

2. Aims and Objectives of the Programmes

2.1. BA Digital Media (Hochschule Darmstadt)

The bachelor programme is a seven-semester programme awarding 210 credits to the graduates. During the first accreditation period the programme has been modified from a 180-credit programme to a 210-credit programme to allow for a prolonged period of industrial placement.

The programme shall provide an interdisciplinary media education to qualify graduates for jobs in the media industry. The aim is to equip the students with an understanding of both theoretic and applied concepts of digital media. Apart from that graduates shall be aware of the psychological, sociological and economic implications of digital media for themselves, client groups and the community at large. Students are supposed to acquire social competences (e.g. capacity for teamwork, leadership, interdisciplinary work, intercultural cooperation, etc.) as well. While providing a broad background to media studies the programme shall give the students the opportunity to follow their own special interests guided by "pathways" through specific focus areas.

Entry requirements must comply with § 54 of the *Hessisches Hochschulgesetz* (the regulations for Higher Education institutions of the State of Hesse). Admission to the bachelor programme is based on an entrance exam.

2.2. MA Leadership in the Creative Industries (Hochschule Darmstadt)

The master programme “Leadership in the Creative Industries” is a three-semester programme awarding 90 credits. The programme has been modified during the accreditation period from the four-semester master programme “Media Direction” to the new format and title. The programme is designed as a consecutive, application-oriented programme.

The programme is aimed at educating media experts for development and leadership roles in the media industry. Students are expected to acquire methodical and analytical capabilities and the capacity for the syntheses of context-specific application.

Prerequisite for admission is a bachelor’s degree or a German *Diplom* (Diploma) in the field of digital media with an overall German grade of 2.0 or better. Admission to the master programme is based on an entrance test.

Experts’ Evaluation

Technical as well as interdisciplinary aspects are respected in the programmes, which lead to an academic qualification of the students. The degree programmes are characterized by an interdisciplinary approach within the field of media. This aim complies with the profile of Hochschule Darmstadt, which does not only offer a large range of subjects but has quite a few interdisciplinary programmes in its portfolio. In the bachelor programme the students can choose between four specialisations in Dieburg: “Interactive Media Design” (conception and realisation of interactive media systems), “Animation and Game” (conception and realisation of computer games and animation formats), “Video” (conception and production of digital video films) and “Sound” (conception and production of digital sound product and sound systems). The interdisciplinary approach is also assured by obligatory electives in the programme as well as by project work. In the master programme, the students can continue in their specialisations, however the projects are carried out on a higher academic level and their focus is rather conceptual and strategic than practical.

The programmes aim to develop the students’ competence for involvement in society and enhance the students’ personality development. This is achieved through a strong focus on problem-based learning in projects as a major form of instruction in Dieburg. Students work in self-organised groups and attend classes in cultural and social studies. In addition to that, the students can acquire intercultural competences during a stay abroad in Ireland (which is not mandatory however) or elsewhere as well as at home, as there are always exchange students from Cork in the classes.

The expert panel wondered to what extent the programmes in Dieburg and Cork are actually joint degrees, as the programmes in each institution have different names and somewhat different content. On the site visit, the experts were able to recognize the cooperative spirit of the people in charge. Also, the programmes at both institutions have the same objectives and aims. The explanation that each programme has developed as a “brand” and that therefore the adjustment of titles of the different programmes, which was a recommendation from the first accreditation, would be harmful is plausible from the experts’ point of view.

In addition to that, a stay at the partner institution in Germany or Ireland is not obligatory. Students may go for one semester or even longer to the other institution, and depending on the semester(s) of the stay, German students may for instance not only obtain the Irish BA, but also the Irish BA (Hon). As a result, however the majority of the students receive the degree from an HEI in another country, without ever being there, even though a stay would be possible without any delay. The perspective of the students concerning a stay abroad will be discussed in chapter 4.

This approach violates neither Irish nor German regulations on accreditation as there are no rules on what a joint degree actually is from this perspective. The criteria of the European Consortium on Accreditation mention among others a stay abroad, but not as an obligatory part of the curriculum. The presented concepts were accredited in 2007 and have – unfortunately – remained unchanged until now, at least as far as the integration of a stay in the other HEI is concerned. The HEIs did not make use of the chance to enhance the programmes, so that the “joint” character may get more weight. The expert panel is concerned that the “products” of the two institutions – the joint degree programmes of this accreditation process, promise or imply something, which is not actually mandatory. With regard to the suite of these programmes leading to joint awards provided by Cork Institute of Technology and Hochschule Darmstadt, the expert panel therefore strongly recommends that a stay at the partner institution should be obligatory (**Finding 1**). In an ideal case, students would spend at least one semester in Cork respectively Dieburg. Good alternatives could be jointly organised summer schools or cross-national virtual and non-virtual projects within the curricula.

Due to the introduction of a work placement semester into the bachelor programme “Digital Media” the objectives of the programme have been changed to a more work market-focused perspective. As a result, the duration of studies in the bachelor programme has been extended from six to seven semesters whereas the master programme “Leadership in the Creative Industries” lasts three semesters instead of four.

The major change in the master programme was the new name: the programme is not only supposed to extend knowledge in the chosen specialisation but to enable the students to make strategic decisions in projects in their specific field. This approach takes the needs of a job market into consideration, where creativity is important, but where strategic aspects become more and more important.

Quality and Qualifications Ireland has prepared a Joint Award Agreement with Hochschule Darmstadt and Cork Institute of Technology. This document regulates the extent and nature of the cooperation, but existed at the time of the visit to Dieburg only as a draft. The Joint Award Agreement must be presented as a document ratified by Quality and Qualifications Ireland as well as Hochschule Darmstadt and Cork Institute of Technology (**Finding 2**). It is also recommended that the associated Consortium Agreement between the partner providers, viewed at the site visit, be finalised.

Entrance requirements for the programmes are clearly defined, documented and published. They are adequate to the demands of the study programmes. The selection processes are transparent and ECTS are awarded. The criteria used are both clearly defined and adequate to the demands of the study programmes. These processes meet the criteria of Ireland’s national policy on access, transfer and progression.

Hochschule Darmstadt has policies for gender equity and for the promotion of equal opportunities of students in special situations, which are implemented at the level of the study programme, as demanded by the German accreditation regulations.

3 Quality of the curricula

3.1 BA Digital Media – Hochschule Darmstadt (Dieburg Campus)

The HEI points out that there is a broad multidisciplinary basis giving each student the opportunity to acquire basic knowledge in the areas of media design, media technology, media management and media culture. Students shall then specialize in one of four pathways (animation & game, interactive media design, sound, video). Each pathway is a combination of specialized courses which allows the student to gain a deeper insight into his/her specific area of interest. In addition, students can choose three electives each semester from each pathway. Electives are supposed to provide an introduction to subjects like media design, media informatics and technology, media management, and media philosophy.

The curriculum contains one semester of industrial placement (semester 4). Starting in semester 3 projects shall be integrated into the curriculum. Projects allow for problem-based interdisciplinary learning and progress from “orientation-focussed” to “comprehensive”. In their bachelors’ theses students are required to demonstrate multidisciplinary skills. The organisation of the curriculum allows for windows of mobility in the semesters 3, 5 and 6.

3.2 MA Leadership in the Creative Industries – Hochschule Darmstadt (Dieburg Campus)

The curriculum of the master programme consists, according to the self-report, mainly of projects, progressing from “scientific” and “strategic” to “advanced”. Electives can be chosen from the following topics: media concepts, media strategies, new technologies as well as business models and creative leadership. If they wish, students may focus on media arts, media sciences of media management. In the final master’s project students are required to demonstrate their conceptual, strategic and innovative potential.

Experts’ Evaluation

The curricula of the programmes are characterized by a good balance of theory and practice. They assure continuous progress and extend the students’ existing knowledge. The problem-based learning approach assures that students acquire instrumental, systemic and communications skills and competencies. With the combination of the individual modules, students can reach the qualification objectives formulated by the HEI.

The expert panel confirmed that both HEIs are aware of the German Qualification Standards and the Irish National Framework of Qualifications and the HETAC Award Standards, particularly the Computing Standard, and all programmes are designed and reviewed in light of these respective standards. The curricula meet the requirements of the Framework of Qualification for German Degrees of 21 April 2005 in the respective valid version (bachelor or master level).

The major change in the curricula is the introduction of a work placement in the fourth semester of the bachelor programme. Aims and objectives are transparent and documented. The experts appreciate the introduction of a one-semester work placement, which is a proven and tested tool from the Diploma era.

Staff attend conferences of the scientific community and also make use of research semesters. The findings of such occasions as well as the strong presence of visiting lecturers from professional practice assure that developments and standards of the academic community are taken into consideration for further enhancement of the programmes. It was confirmed that both parties considered the standards in their review of the programmes and are confident that the requisite standards can be met by the proposed programmes.

When revising the Irish modules, QQI Standards were taken into consideration for the non-joint programmes at Cork Institute of Technology, which contribute modules to joint programmes present here as well. As already mentioned before, the panel of experts were able to consult the

report of the programmatic review of the non-joint programmes in Cork, which took place under the delegated authority of the HEI itself. The report proved that the modules correspond to the national Irish standards.

According to the expert panel, teaching and learning methods for the programmes are more than adequate. The problem-based learning approach, which makes the students work together in projects within their own specialisations or with students from other specialisations, assures real life learning scenarios and serves as an excellent preparation for professional daily life.

Every module, as a rule, concludes with an examination covering the entire module. The examinations serve the purpose of determining, whether the formulated qualification objectives, the intended learning outcomes, have been achieved. Different methods of assessment (written, oral, presentation, papers, etc.) are assured and provided for the students.

All the modules are documented in the module manual, which is updated regularly. The current version of the module manual is accessible to students. The only necessary improvement from the experts' point of view relates to the documentation of the basics of project management in the module manual (**Finding 3**). The experts were concerned whether students are able to acquire a sufficient theoretic background in this field considering the fact that working in projects takes a lot of room in the curricula. During the visit, this aspect was discussed, but it emerged that it the problem is one of documentation. The panel recommends revisions to ensure greater clarity.

There is no explicit mobility window in the master programme. In the bachelor programme, the third, fifth and sixth semester are ideal for going to Cork or elsewhere. (The panel noted that whilst students in Dieburg and in Cork have the opportunity to go on Erasmus exchanges to other countries, their relationship is the only one that leads to joint awards currently.)

4 Feasibility of Studies

Responsibilities for the programmes in the respective departments are supposed to be defined. Each programme has an overall programme coordinator who is responsible for the coordination of courses in terms of content and organization and in cooperation with the so-called focus area coordinator (Dieburg). Due to the special arrangement of the timetable there is, according to the HEIs, no overlap in courses.

Prospective students shall receive information at various points in time and through various media. Information is provided on websites of the HEIs and the respective departments. For enrolled students the HEIs offer an orientation week at the beginning of the programme providing all necessary information on the programmes themselves and the use of relevant study and research facilities (library, computer pools, etc.).

Apart from the counselling services of the department, Hochschule Darmstadt shall provide the usual student services comprising a general counselling services as well as services for students with special needs.

All information on the programme (including module descriptions, assessment regulations) is supposed to be available to the students via internet and/or intranet.

According to the self-report, all parts of the programme are modularized and students receive credits for all elements of the curriculum. Assessment usually takes place in one final examination at the end of each module. Some final examinations require prior assessments. There is a variety of teaching methods; special emphasis is placed on project work with problem-based learning.

There are special assessment regulations for students with disabilities (study regulations § 10, 6) as well as regulations for the recognition of external assessments. The university regularly monitors the student workload.

Experts' Evaluation

Responsibilities are clearly distributed in the study programmes; there are programme coordinators as well as module coordinators. These responsibilities are transparent to the students. From the expert panel's point of view this is very important if students fail or are not satisfied with the result of their assessment. According to the HEI representatives, this has actually never happened, and in this case (and in general as well) students could refer to the coordinators in their home country.

It is assured that contents and organisation of classes are coherent. The workshop projects generally take place on Wednesdays and Thursdays. The elective modules generally take place on Mondays, Tuesdays and Fridays as well as on weekends. They do not overlap with the projects; however, the absence of course overlapping cannot be guaranteed completely due to the large number of course selections.

Regular meetings take place between the lecturers on the focus area and study area levels (official meetings) as well as informal meetings within related specialised groups of lecturers. Since related specialised content is bundled in modules, it is the task of those responsible for the modules to discuss and coordinate these in terms of content.

Orientation and introductory events for the study programmes are sufficiently provided. There is an orientation week at the beginning of the semester, where students meet the staff and the faculty teaching in the programmes. There are various social events to make the students familiar with the institution's infrastructure, e.g. the library. There are special events about the moodle system, the elective classes and helpful computer tools, and the students receive special equipment licenses, so that they can use the technology available, e.g. cameras, light systems, audio systems) organised by the video focus area.

There are facilities on guidance and counselling to students, as well as on institutional level as on faculty level. The needs of students with children, foreign students, and students with disabilities are also taken into consideration.

Foreign students receive advice from the International Office. The experts were impressed by the infrastructure and service provided for foreign students in Dieburg, who receive help when looking for housing and who are even picked up from the airport or the railway station. This hospitality is certainly one, but of course not the only reason, why many students from Cork do not only stay for one semester in Dieburg, but even for two, three or four semesters.

The presumed student workload has been checked for reliability and changes have been made. The difference between Irish practice regarding credit and work load (20 hours per 1 ECT/Credit Point) and German practice (25 hours per 1 ECT/Credit Point) does not cause a problem as courses attended in the other country are recognized on the basis of learning outcomes. Therefore, if German students respect the timetable of the Irish semester concerned, they will automatically be awarded 30 ECTs/Credit Points.

A lot of students extend their studies, but this is not due to an overloaded curriculum. Obviously, students want to take more electives than are actually obligatory, and quite a few students want to work more on their projects. The HEI should watch these developments carefully. The experts recommend that the reasons for students extending their studies be documented as well as evaluated and possibly lead to remedial measures if necessary (**Finding 4**).

The bachelor programme contains a one-semester work placement for practical component, which credited with 30 ECTs/Credit points.

The examination regulations assure the recognition of credits achieved at other higher education institutions as well as externally achieved credits in accordance with the Lisbon Recognition Convention.

The students who were interviewed during the visit to Dieburg told that the recognition of Irish modules in Germany and vice versa did not cause any problems. Some German students attended the programme because they were attracted by the possibility of integrating a stay abroad. However, most German students chose the programmes because they were interested in the specialisations offered and in the interdisciplinary approach, and not in a link with Ireland. Additionally, a stay in Ireland may also interrupt cooperation in projects with other students and therefore would not be attractive. Apart from the fact that a stay abroad, for either cohort is not obligatory, these might be explanations, why only part of a cohort goes abroad and much fewer students travel from Germany to Ireland than vice versa. The Irish students appreciated the problem-based learning approach in Germany and the projects with the German students.

The Consortium Agreement between the partners indicates that an external examiner is jointly appointed for the joint programmes, however at the site visit it was established that this is not the case and that there are different understandings around such a model. It is recommended that the parties consider carefully the issues and ensure that the joint programmes provided, leading to joint awards of Hochschule Darmstadt and QQI (or CIT following the delegation of authority) are in compliance with 2009 HETAC *Assessment and Standards*.

Frequency and organisation of student assessments are adequate. The examination regulations provide for compensation of disadvantages for students with disabilities. The examination regulations were subjected to legal verification and have been published. The study programme, the course of study, examination requirements and the prerequisites for admittance including the regulations for reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities are documented and published.

5 Employability

Several elements in the curricula are especially geared towards enhancing the employability of graduates, especially project work. The combination of a broad based programme with specialised focus areas shall also, according to the HEI, contribute to graduates' attractiveness on the labour market. A survey has shown that many graduates gain a suitable job within three to five months after graduation. During the last five years there have been talks with employers about their experiences with graduates and future requirements of the labour market. There is close cooperation with employers in the programmes as well, as many projects are conducted in cooperation with the industry.

Experts' Evaluation

The programmes aim to enable the students to take up a qualified employment. Graduates are attractive to possible employers because of their interdisciplinary education. This is evidenced by the fact that about 85% of the graduates have obtained a job within three months of graduation, which cannot be taken for granted on the difficult media work market. The graduates' fluency in English and their intercultural competence due to the strong presence of Irish students and/or even their experience from abroad is another plus, which makes them attractive employees. The problem-based learning in projects assures real-life conditions within the study programmes, which assures the employability of the graduates as well.

The missing "obligatory" stay abroad has already been discussed above in chapter 2. This aspect has particular importance for future employers of joint degree graduates. Employers of joint degree graduates may falsely assume the graduate has been to both countries providing the qualification and this in turn may lead to ill-feeling, when the employer discovers that an attractive candidate has never been to Cork/Dieburg even though she/he has attended a full-time joint degree programme. (It would be different if the programmes presented were long-distance programmes). Though the work market is apparently excellent at the moment, the HEIs should take into consid-

eration that graduates of these programmes compete, in the long run, with candidates who have integrated a stay abroad into their studies and not with those who have not.

The experts commend the introduction of the work placement on the Dieburg programme, which will enhance already existing contacts with the job market. Though students are supposed to find the placement by themselves, the staff give assistance if students have problems in finding a company. The experts expressed concern as to whether there are enough prospective employers for the students, but the Dieburg representatives advised that visiting industry professionals teaching on the programmes search actively for placement students. In addition the on-going reorganisation of the campus in Dieburg is expected to attract a lot of companies in the field of media, who may settle nearby and who will need students participating in their projects etc.

Possible careers as free-lance workers are also options for the graduates. The Career Service offers classes on the foundation of a company and on the conditions of being self-employed. The master programme contains classes on entrepreneurship.

6 Resources

The Dieburg bachelor programme allows an intake of 120 students, the master programme an intake of 40 students. There are 15 professors teaching in the programmes with 60 to 70 temporary teaching assignments each semester to offer additional courses. Elective courses are available to students from other programmes as well and there imports from other bachelor and master courses, e.g. from the Social Science Faculty or the Faculty of Information Technology.

The facilities comprise a number of specialized rooms and studios for the needs of the media programmes (e. g. an editing studio, sound scape laboratory, recording studio AV studio, editing suite, various computer pools, etc.).

According to the programmatic review of the programmes of Cork Institute of Technology, there are 20 staff members teaching in the programmes “BA Multimedia”, “BA (Hon) Multimedia” and “MA Media Design”. The annual intake in Cork is 20 students for the bachelor programme and an average of about five students started the master programme in the past few years.

Experts' Evaluation

The staff members teaching on the programmes are qualified and competent to do so. As the visit to Dieburg was conducted entirely in English, the expert panel was able to recognize that the personnel had a good or even a fluent command of English, which is essential for the programmes.

Taking the interdependence with other study programmes into account, the number of staff is also sufficient. Interdependence occurs for the compulsory electives within the faculty. Imports are determined and secured by so-called “Import Agreements”.

Both institutions appoint full-time, part-time, temporary staff according to the respective national regulations and practice. The programmes in both institutions profit from the competence of external lecturers, who may also act as assessors. Hochschule Darmstadt has appropriate measures for personnel development and monitoring of qualifications in place.

During the visit to Dieburg, the experts were able to visit the studios located at the campus. There is adequate space, which is necessary for working successfully in interdisciplinary projects, and the students profit from modern equipment, which prepares them very well for professional life.

7 Quality Assurance

Quality management at Hochschule Darmstadt is based on university-wide measures and faculty specific measures. In 2006 a position in quality management was created in the central administration, which is responsible for the implementation and documentation of quality processes. There are defined processes for the student evaluation of courses. In addition the university carries out surveys with students in the first semester and with its alumni and graduates. For the two programmes graduate surveys were conducted in 2008 and 2011. Excerpts of the interviews are contained in the submission.

According to the self-report, the department has used the results from the different surveys for the improvement of its programmes. The student workload is monitored in the student evaluation and shows no indication of problems with the feasibility of the programmes.

Cork Institute of Technology carries out the reviews of its national, non-joint degree programmes under the delegated authority of QQI.

Experts' Evaluation

Quality assurance is adequate at both institutions. The Irish contributions to the programmes have been reviewed under the delegated authority of Cork Institute of Technology, as has already been mentioned. The experts take the report into consideration for their decision. The results of the internal quality management of Hochschule Darmstadt are used for the further development of the study programmes. Evaluation, studies concerning the student workload as well as academic accomplishment and the whereabouts of the graduates serve for possible improvements.

An important institution for programme-specific quality assurance is the Joint Management Board, which meets several times per year. The Joint Management Board discusses evaluation results as well as the adaptation of the programmes to new national regulations. Students – usually the class representatives – are invited to join the meetings, but there are no permanent student members on the board. If students were represented in this committee, the discussion of survey or evaluation results and the development of measures for improvement would be more efficient. At the moment, these results are also discussed in the faculty council, where the student representatives are not necessarily enrolled in the programmes concerned in this validation process and are probably not aware of the special needs of their fellow students. Therefore, the panel of experts would like to recommend that student representatives be appointed to the Joint Management Board as soon as possible (**Finding 5**). It is further recommended that the student feedback mechanisms for the joint programmes be specified in the Consortium Agreement and that there is a particular focus on the 'jointness' of the programmes in the feedback sought.

8 Recommendations of the panel of experts to the Accreditation Commission of AQAS and to QQI

The expert panel recommends a conditional reaccreditation (revalidation) of the programmes provided by **Cork Institute of Technology** and **Hochschule Darmstadt** which lead to joint awards of **Quality and Qualifications Ireland** and **Hochschule Darmstadt**.

Findings:

1. A stay at the partner institution should be obligatory
2. The Joint Award Agreement must be presented as a document ratified by Quality and Qualifications Ireland as well as Hochschule Darmstadt and Cork Institute of Technology.
3. The module manual must contain documentation of the basics of project management.
4. The reasons for students extending their studies should be documented as well as evaluated and possibly lead to measures.
5. There should be student representatives in the Joint Management Board.