TUS

Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest

Ollscoil Teicneolaíochta na Sionainne:
Lár Tíre Iarthar Láir

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**Rannog na Foghlama ar Feadh an tSaoil
Department of Lifelong Learning**

Report of Peer Review Panel

Programmatic Review

of the

Faculty of Continuing, Professional, Online and Distance Learning

External Validation Visit - 7th and 8th February 2024

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report outlines, in summary form, the proceedings of the Programmatic Review Panel for the Department of Lifelong Learning, and the findings and conclusions of the External Validation Panel conducted on the 7th and 8th February 2024. The external validation visit was undertaken in accordance with TUS Academic Regulations. A Programmatic Review external validation panel makes an independent impartial judgement on the programmatic review and associated critical self-study and proposed programme changes.

2.0 GENERAL INFORMATION

2.1 Higher Education Provider

Provider	Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest
Faculty	Faculty of Continuing, Professional, Online and Distance Learning
Department	Department of Lifelong Learning
Date of Visit	7th and 8th February

2.2 External Re-Validation Panel of Expert Assessors

Day 1: Wednesday 7th February 2024 - Business Programmes	
Name	**Affiliation**
Mr Gerard O' Donovan (Chair)	Head of Faculty of Business and Humanities, MTU
Dr Séamus Ó Tuama	Director, ACE (Adult Continuing Education) Chair, ASEM Lifelong Learning Hub, UCC
Mr Shane Hill	Head of Department of Management and Financial Studies, DKIT
Dr Leo Casey	Director of Centre for Education and Lifelong Learning, NCIRL
Mr Pat Claffey	Director, QMP Consulting
Ms Patricia Doherty	Head of Department of Business Studies, ATU (Letterkenny)
Dr Patrick Donohue	Secretary to Panel

Day 2: Thursday 8ᵗʰ February 2024 – Science, Engineering and Quality Programmes	
Name	**Affiliation**
Mr Gerard O' Donovan (Chair)	Head of Faculty of Business and Humanities, MTU
Professor Graham Heaslip	Head of School of Engineering, ATU (Galway)
Neil Quinlan	Head of Department of Lifelong Learning, SETU
Dr Frances Hardiman	Head of Faculty of Engineering, SETU
Dr Joseph Collins	Director of Further Education and Training, ETBI
Niamh Doherty	Director, Lean: Europe, Africa & Asia at STERIS AST
Dr Patrick Donohue	Secretary to Panel

2.3 TUS Staff

Name	**Role**
Prof Vincent Cunnane	President TUS Midlands Midwest
Dr Terry Twomey	VP Academic Affairs & Registrar
Dr Michael Tobin	Dean of Faculty
Mr Seadna Ryan	Head of Department
Programme Leaders Mr Declan Doran, Ms Shona Stewart, Mr Jim Gilchrist, Mr Kevin Farrell	
Programme Team (Business Programmes) Brian Kelly, John Kelly, Joe Conlon, Patrick O' Dwyer, Nora Shine, Maria Padden, Susan Colley, Bríd Burns, Gayle Tarmey, Peter Meehan, Dr Jude Lohan, Rizwan Ahmed, Sharon Byrne, Dr Barraí Hennebry, Oliver McGrath, Karen Costello, Daniel Seery, Barry O' Loughlin,	
Programme Team (Science, Engineering and Quality Programmes) Kevin Sweeney, Colette Kelly, Emer Coughlan, Dr Romina Pezzoli, Karol Farrell, Kris Perkins, Paul McNamee, Michael Fitzpatrick	
Faculty Team: Siobhan Kelly, Janine King, Sophie Devery	
Student Advisors: Imelda Rea, Elaine Burke	

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2.4 Employers/Industry & Alumni Representatives

Day 1: Wednesday 7th February 2024 - Business Programmes	
Representative	**Affiliation**
Eugene Murphy	Engineering Manager, 3A Composites
John Costello	Regional Skills Manager, Regional Skills
Steven Thacker	People Development Manager, DPD
Pauline Leonard	Project Manager, Western Development Commission
Claire Whelan	Deputy HR Manager, Centre Parcs
Paddy Dunican	MBA (Masters of Business Administration) (Master of Business Administration)
Richard Manton	MA in Financial Management
Hugh O' Neill	PG Dip in Executive Management/MBA
Arthur Geraghty	Cert in HRM

Day 2: Thursday 8th February 2024 – Science, Engineering and Quality Programmes	
Representative	**Affiliation**
Eugene Murphy	Engineering Manager, 3A Composites
Neil O' Gorman	Operations Manager, Midland Tyres
Loretta McDermott	HR Manager, Avery Dennison
Aisling Coleman	Chief People & Technology Manager, Mergon
Declan Rooney	Packaging Engineer, Boston Scientific
Kevin Wall	MSc Quality Management & Validation
Deborah Curran	MEng in Packaging, Innovation & Product Design
Jennifer Walsh	MA Engineering Packaging, Innovation and Product Design

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2.5 Current Student Representatives

Day 1: Wednesday 7th February 2024 - Business Programmes	
Name	**Programme**
Christina McClean	Cert in Financial Accounting & Payroll
Fiona Killian	BBS – Level 7
Julie Cunningham	Cert in Supervisory Management & Team Leadership
Imelda Reynolds	Cert in Supervisory Skills for Team Leaders
Claire Donohue	Cert in HRM
Marion Acreman	MBA
Lisa White	Cert in Real Estate Administration
Brendan Forkan	MA in Financial Management

Day 2: Thursday 8th February 2024 – Science, Engineering and Quality Programmes	
Name	**Programme**
Eamonn O' Shea	MEng Packaging Innovation & Product Design
Justyna Traore	MEng Packaging Innovation & Product Design
William Finnerty	PG Dip in Packaging
Anna Czyz	PG Dip in Packaging
Sharon Heavey	MSc in Quality
Sarah Kelly	PG Dip in Quality
Louise Dooley	PG Dip in Quality

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3.0 FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF EXTERNAL VALIDATION PANEL

3.1 Main Findings – Business Suite

The External Validation Panel of Assessors recommends reapproval of the following programmes in the *Department of Lifelong Learning* subject to the conditions and recommendations as specified in Sections 3.2.1 and 3.3.1.

Business Suite of Programmes (Day 1)

Higher Certificate in Business (120 credits)
Bachelor of Business in Business Level 7 Add on, (60 credits)
Bachelor of Business (Hons) in Business Level 8 Add on, (60 credits)

Master of Business Administration (120 credits)
Postgraduate Diploma in Business in Executive Management (60 credits)
Master of Arts in Financial Management (90 credits)
Postgraduate Diploma in Arts in Financial Management (60 credits)

Certificate in Contract Law, Customs and Regulatory Environment (10 credit SPA)
Certificate in Employee Development (20 credit SPA)
Certificate in Financial Accounting and Payroll (60 credit, Minor Award)
Certificate in Human Resources Management (60 credit, Certificate)
Certificate in Logistics and Supply Chain Management (60 credit, Certificate)
Certificate in Marketing, Sales, Theory & Practice (10 credit, SPA)
Certificate in Payroll Applications and Management (10 credit, SPA)
Certificate in Procurement (60 credit, Certificate)
Certificate in Real Estate Administration (60 credit, SPA)
Certificate in Social Media and EBusiness (20 credit, SPA)
Certificate in Supervisory Management and Team Leadership (60 credit, SPA)
Certificate in Supervisory Management Skills for Team Leaders (20 credit, SPA)

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3.2.   Conditions – Business

No Conditions apply.

3.3   Recommendations – Business

1. Include more indicative content on equality, diversity and inclusion in the HR programme.
2. Include more indicative content in the development of soft skills, including dealing with people, emotional intelligence, teamwork, professional practice and communication on the Supervisory Management and Team Leadership programme.
3. Access to central support services to support on-line assessment protocols on final exams is recommended. This should be set out clearly in the programme documentation.
4. The SER would benefit from inclusion of the following by programme – student numbers, attrition, graduation statistics, retention statistics, grade statistics, progression, programme minutes, student surveys, evidence of industry engagement, and national student survey data.
5. Industry engagement on programmes should be formalised.
6. Where the title of two programmes offered within a university is the same, the course content should broadly be the same.
7. Consider introducing electives on the MBA and further opportunities for peer-to-peer learning.
8. Consider exploring AMBA professional accreditation membership to benchmark your MBA with an independent review.
9. Invite industry guest speakers with discipline of knowledge to contribute to programmes.
10. Professional accreditation should be incorporated into relevant programmes.
11. Provide greater consistency in respect of timely feedback to students on assignments. Students should be provided access to a dedicated session to meet with lecturer's post exam results.
12. Investigate further marketing opportunities/taster sessions to promote awareness of educational opportunities at TUS with industry contacts including SME's and alumni.

13. The admirable student support model and course delivery model should be disseminated more widely, contributing to national and international scholarship on adult education and lifelong learning.

14. The Community of Practice model should be written up as a research paper to enable wider dissemination of the model and deeper engagement with best practice internationally. This would enable the team to reflect on and further develop their model. This would support greater emphasis on the scholarship in adult education/lifelong learning.

15. The lecturing team should be encouraged and supported to engage with the adult education and lifelong learning scholarship at national and international level. This will enhance the unit's international profile, support the team to specialise and highlight innovation within the field.

16. The mature entry speaks to the UNESCO objectives that we should leave no one behind and national objectives around inclusion and progression. The university should support the unit to monitor and analyse its effectiveness for both inclusion and progression. This could inform further scholarship and be acknowledged as university EDI (Equality Diversity and Inclusion) (Equality Diversity and Inclusion) achievements.

17. In evaluating the future delivery of its adult education/lifelong learning mission the university should be mindful of the importance of the innovative education practices that are currently in place.

18. The Learning Hubs are very innovative, they could be given greater visibility within the university and potentially be supported through external resources.

19. Consistency and layout of Moodle and Turnitin should be structured to ensure ease of access for learners.

20. Review assessment matrix to ensure timings do not result in assessment congestion for students.

21. Consideration should be given to aligning exam times e.g. night-time module with night-time exams.

3.4   Commendations and Observations – Business

1. The panel commends the leadership of the Faculty and Department and the collegiate engagement evident.

2. The panel noted the enthusiasm and commitment of the programme teams and strong engagement with the panel during the validation event and noted that it was very impressive.

3. The panel was impressed with the faculty research compendium.

4. The university can become a national and international leader in shaping theory and practice in the field, championing best practice and developing and contributing to fields of enquiry in the international literature in adult education/lifelong learning.

5. The panel is impressed with the quality and depth of the self-evaluation undertaken and how this was used to inform the programme revisions.

6. The panel commends the comprehensive programme documentation which was well structured and presented in an accessible manner.

7. The panel commends the student centric approach evident in the department ethos and noted the ongoing efforts to support retention.

8. The panel commends the collaboration with National Learning Hubs to provide opportunities for TUS students to access computers and learning in creating an in-person and on-line learning experience.

3.5 Main Findings – Science, Engineering and Quality Suite

The External Validation Panel of Assessors recommends reapproval of the following programmes in the *Department of Lifelong Learning* subject to the conditions and recommendations as specified in Sections 3.2.2 and 3.3.2.

Science, Engineering and Quality Suite of Programmes (Day 2)

Certificate in Introduction to BioPharma and MedTech (10 credit, SPA)

Certificate in Fundamentals of BioPharma and Med-Technology (20 credit, SPA)

Certificate in Introduction to Good Manufacturing Practice (10 credit, SPA)

Certificate in Introduction to Project Management (10 credit, SPA)

Certificate in Quality Assurance (10 credit, SPA)

Certificate in Fundamentals of Organisational Psychology (20 credit SPA)

Master of Engineering in Packaging, Innovation & Product Design (90 credit Masters)

Post Grad Diploma in Engineering in Packaging, Innovation & Product Design
(60 credit PgD)

Master of Science in Quality Management and Validation (90 credit Masters)

Post Grad Diploma in Science in Quality Management and Validation (60 credit PgD)

3.6 Conditions – Science, Engineering and Quality

1. Review the Level 9 programmes in MEng/Postgraduate Diploma in Packaging, Innovation and Product Design. Complete a mapping of the MEng/PG Dip to the QQI/TUS Engineering Standards at Level 9, confirming that MEng/PG Dip meets Engineering standards, as the panel indicates that currently the programme is more aligned to MSc standards.

2. Review the minimum entry criteria for all Level 9 programmes in respect of the programme learning outcomes ensuring alignment with TUS entry standards and discipline requirements, including IELTS.

3.7   Recommendations – Science, Engineering and Quality

1. Review the syllabus content on the Level 9 programmes in terms of depth and breadth ensuring it is consistent with Level 9 learning outcomes.

2. A greater consistency around titles of programmes is required to facilitate understanding by the learner.

3. Fundamentals in Sterilisation should be embedded in all relevant programmes.

4. The introduction of Scrum or Agile project management is recommended to facilitate practical application in the workplace.

5. Review the syllabus to include the availability of industry software applications and resources for students, for example SolidWorks.

6. Consider how relevant learning content relating to practical learning opportunities could be incorporated across the programme suite.

7. Enhance learning outcomes with ethical considerations across the Level 9 programmes.

8. The volume and scale of the syllabus is too broad in a number of 10-credit modules, more depth could be achieved with 2 x 5 ECTS modules.

9. Further opportunities in stackable awards should be explored to facilitate balancing of workload and opportunities to focus on core areas of learning.

10. Investigate further opportunities with Skillnet Ireland.

11. The SER would benefit from inclusion of the following by programme – student numbers, attrition, graduation statistics, retention statistics, grade statistics, progression, programme minutes, student surveys, evidence of industry engagement and national student survey data.

12. Industry engagement on programmes should be formalised in respect of guest speakers and peer to peer learning considering TUS engagement strategy.

13. Feedback for students is an extremely valuable learning tool and a consistent approach based on evidence based best practice should be encouraged.

14. Development and roll-out of a group assessment policy across the faculty to ensure consistency and fairness to all students.

15. Enhance induction, bring in alumni to give overview of the programme and level of workload commitment required.

16. Consideration should be given to incorporate in-person days within the programmes, notably induction, throughout the programme and in-company visits.

17. Pre-course commencement, it is recommended to identify diverse types of learners and experiences and customise induction for each type.

18. Consistency and layout of Moodle should be structured to ensure ease of access for learners.

19. Students with learning disabilities need to be identified and supported, this may not be as noticeable in an online programme format.

20. Subject matter experts from Science and Engineering should be consulted in relation to course content.

21. Specific QA policy and procedures for online delivery within the faculty was referenced. This should be included in the documentation provided.

22. Ensure the continued success of Continuing Lifelong Learning at TUS, due consideration should be given to ensure a sustainable model is chosen which incorporates best practice to date, disciplinary expertise and central supports.

3.8 Commendations and Observations – Science, Engineering and Quality

1. The panel commends the leadership of the Faculty and Department and the collegiate engagement evident.

2. It was noted that the enthusiasm and commitment of the programme teams and strong engagement with the panel during the validation event was very impressive.

3. The panel commends the faculty on the availability and support of assigned supervisors.

4. The quality and depth of the self-evaluation undertaken and how this was used to inform the programme revisions was impressive.

5. The programme documentation was well structured and presented in an accessible manner.

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6. The student centric approach is evident in the department ethos and the ongoing efforts to support retention are noted.

7. The panel recognises the excellent engagement with industries within the region.

8. The panel commends the Community of Practice model and the online supports available through Moodle.

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Signature of Chairperson

Date: 08/02/2024