



**TUS**

**Technological University of the Shannon:  
Midlands Midwest**

Ollscoil Teicneolaíochta na Sionainne:  
Lár Tíre Iarthar Láir

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**Putting Learning First:**

**TUS Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy 2022 – 2025**



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## SECTION 1: PUTTING LEARNING FIRST

### 1.1 Why Put Learning First?

The Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest is committed to excellence in learning, teaching and assessment. 'Putting Learning First', explicitly acknowledges that the University is a 'learning community' committed to the professional and personal development of all its staff and students, within the region it serves. The choice to put learning first is directly informed by the mission of the University and in turn is reflected in the educational philosophy of TUS. This educational philosophy will be demonstrated and supported through three key enablers:

- A graduate attributes framework which was designed to prepare graduates of the University with the knowledge, skills and competences for living and working in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- A curriculum design framework offering a sound basis for programme design.
- The creation of a learning community of intellectual and social partnership which is supported by seven key strategic pillars.

Each of these enablers will be further explained to make explicit how learning, teaching and assessment will be designed and implemented in the University.

### 1.2 Educational Philosophy of TUS

TUS is a dynamic learning community that co-creates an inclusive learning experience through leadership in teaching, active learning, research, scholarship, industry and civic collaboration. TUS shapes the future of our students and responds to the social, cultural and economic needs of our community; locally, nationally and internationally.

In order to realise this educational philosophy, the University endorses the enactment of the following professional values amongst those who teach in TUS, through a commitment to:

- Learning and the development of each learner to achieve their potential
- Fairness, justice, equity, respect and ethical practice
- Valid, authentic, fair and reliable assessment
- Collaborative learning and the development of communities of practice
- Evidenced, research-based teaching informed by scholarship
- Courage, openness to new approaches, innovations and continuing reflection on professional practice<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> (Fitzpatrick & Harvey, 2011)

## SECTION 2: TUS GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES FRAMEWORK

### 2.1 Introduction to the TUS Graduate Attributes Framework

TUS Graduate Attributes have evolved from the educational philosophy described previously and are the overarching components that inform the principles and approaches for curriculum and programme design in the University. These in turn inform the goals and objectives of the seven complementary pillars, designed to support excellence in learning, teaching and assessment, as indicated in Figure 1.

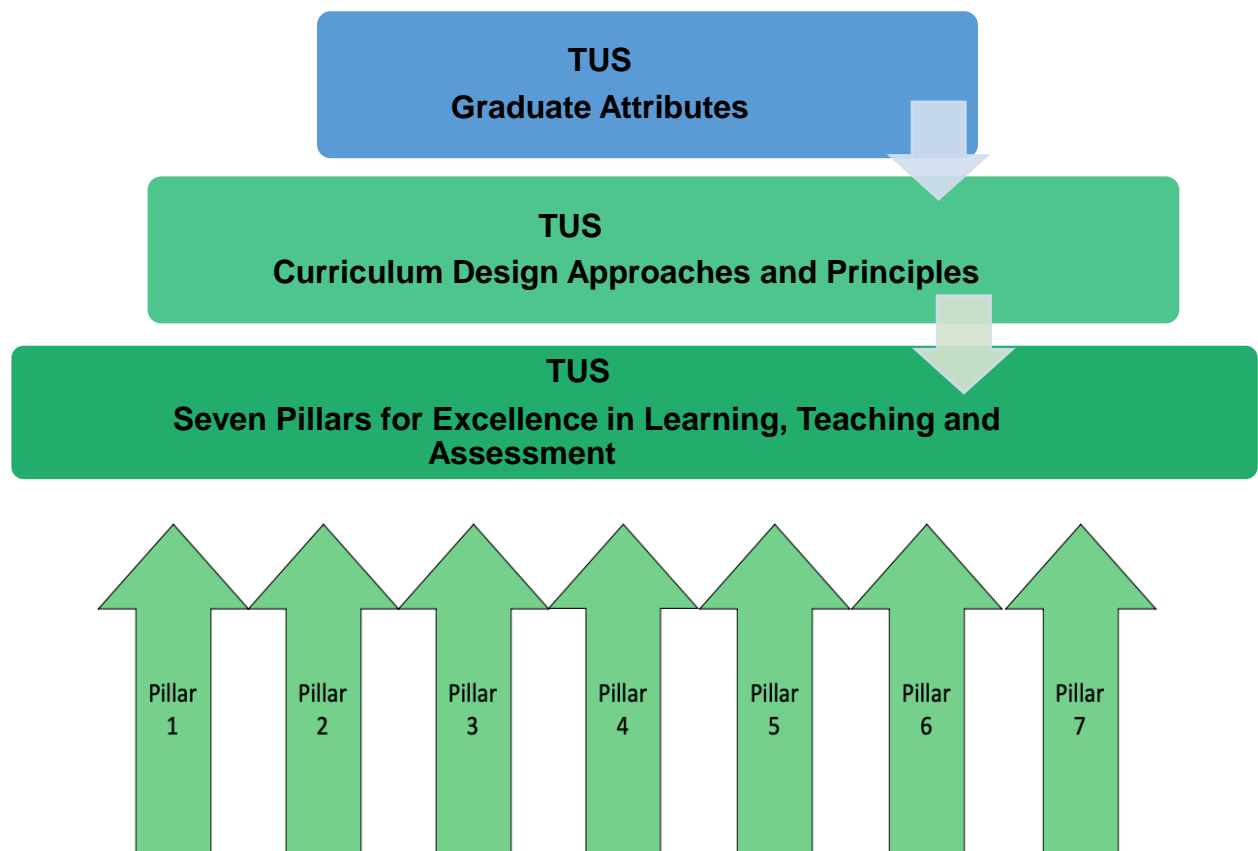


Figure 1 TUS Positioning of Graduate Attributes in Curriculum Design

### 2.2 TUS Graduate Attributes

TUS Graduate Attributes will inform programme design resulting in a broader interpretation of the knowledge, skills, and competences which students are required to develop in higher education in keeping the National Framework of Qualifications.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> (Department of Education and Skills, 2011)

This is particularly relevant to the demand for non-routine, creative problem solving, and the requirement to be able to cooperate, collaborate and communicate with others as global citizens in a digital world.<sup>3</sup> By taking a broader perspective, instead of solely focusing on the workplace, TUS higher-level Graduate Attributes outlined in Figure 2, will enable the development of life-long skills and competencies that are transdisciplinary and transferable in global contexts. This will be evidenced both by measuring academic achievements and by capturing additional engagement within and beyond the University campus. Recognition of all the components that contribute to the holistic development of TUS graduates, reflects the significance of both the formal and informal curriculum in the University. Our aim is to encourage and prepare our graduates to contribute to the communities and society in which they will live, work and learn. It has been widely agreed that graduates in the twenty-first century are required to demonstrate knowledge, skills and capabilities that extend beyond discipline specific or technical aspects of their role, so that they are prepared for an increasingly diverse and changing workplace.<sup>4</sup>

As suggested by the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030: “the emphasis has switched from over-specialisation towards deeper and broader disciplinary foundations, with learning objectives that explicitly seek to nurture in students the creativity, enthusiasm and skills required for continual engagement with learning”.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, the University will embed, as an integral part of the learning experience, attributes that will contribute to the development of the whole person, rather than being narrowly focused on employability and the development of knowledge and generic skills which are discipline specific.<sup>6</sup>

In an approach that underpins the mission and values of TUS, the University is committed to enabling the development of robust Graduate Attributes which have been purposefully formulated to elucidate the key commitments the University will make when preparing graduates for work and life, irrespective of discipline area. TUS Graduate Attributes are in keeping with the strategic objectives of the University.

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<sup>3</sup> (JISC, 2020)

<sup>4</sup> (Yorke & Harvey, 2005)

<sup>5</sup> (Department of Education and Skills, 2016)

<sup>6</sup> (Cole & Tibby, 2013)

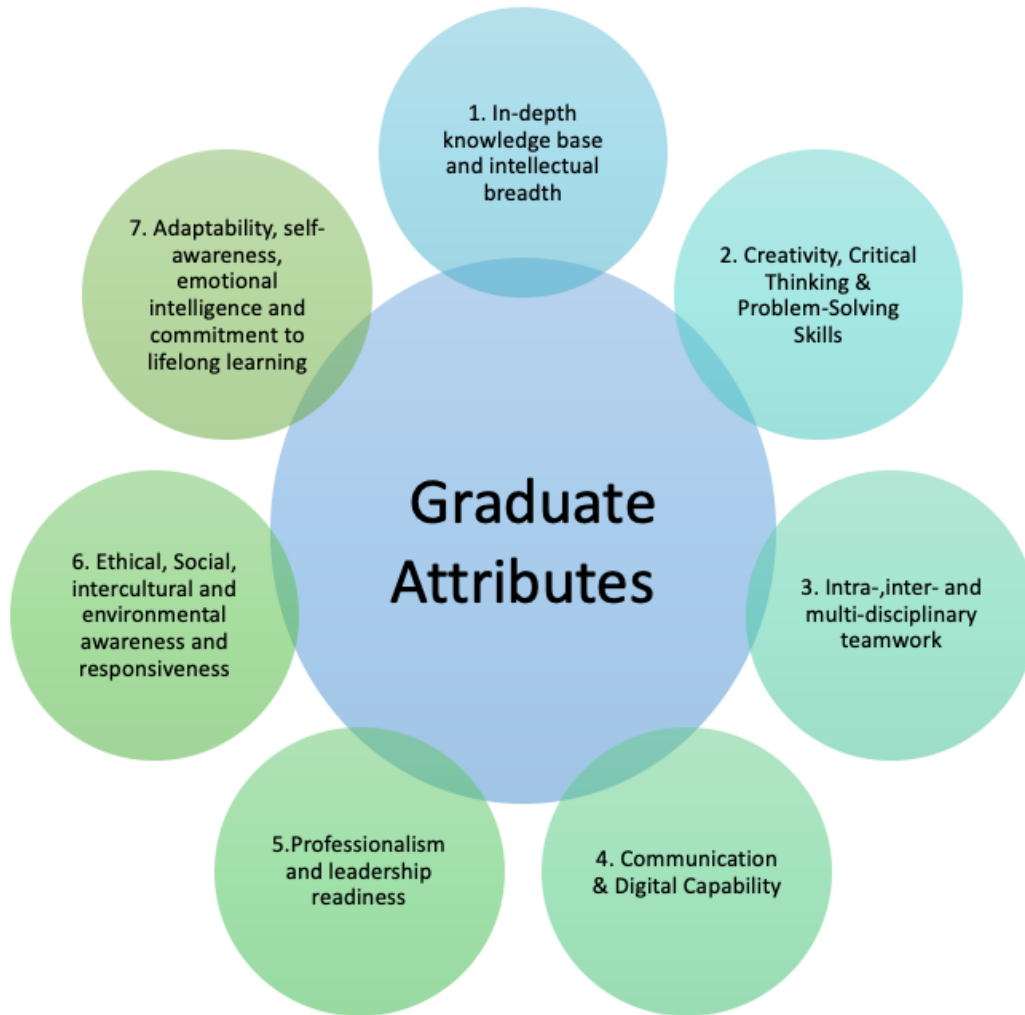


Figure 2 TUS Graduate Attributes

TUS Graduate Attributes are explained further in Table 1, framed as responses to three key questions:

- **What do we want our graduates to know?**
- **What do we want our graduates to be able to do?**
- **What difference do we want our graduates to make?**

Table 1. TUS Graduates Attributes

| TUS Graduate Attributes                                |   |
|--|---|
| <b>What do we want our graduates to know?</b>          | <b>Attribute One</b>  |
|  | In-depth knowledge base and intellectual breadth  |
|  | TUS graduates will demonstrate both a depth and breadth of knowledge relevant to their chosen discipline.   |
| <b>What do we want our graduates to be able to do?</b> | <b>Attribute Two</b>  |
|  | Creativity, critical thinking and problem-solving skills  |
|  | TUS graduates will be curious, enquiry-led problem-solvers, able to apply critical thinking to devise creative, innovative and effective solutions to real-world challenges.                  |
|  | <b>Attribute Three</b>  |
|  | Intra-, inter- and multi-disciplinary teamwork  |
|  | TUS graduates will apply their knowledge in multi-disciplinary or multi-professional contexts, forging mutually supportive and enriching relationships with their colleagues and communities. |
|  | <b>Attribute Four</b>   |
|  | Communication and digital capability <sup>7</sup>   |
|  | TUS graduates will be equipped to live, learn, work and interact professionally and personally with others, in a digital world.   |
| <b>What difference do we want our</b>                  | <b>Attribute Five</b>   |
|  | Professionalism and leadership readiness  |
|  | TUS graduates will be action-oriented and pro-active, with the potential to take leadership roles in the workplace and wider community.   |

<sup>7</sup> Digital Capability references the JISC Model (2014), [Developing digital literacies | Jisc](#) and includes a range of digital capabilities including information and media literacy.



| TUS Graduate Attributes   |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| <b>graduates to make?</b> | <b>Attribute Six</b>   |
|                           | Ethical, social, intercultural, environmental awareness and responsiveness   |
|                           | TUS graduates will be committed to contributing to their local communities, while also being empathetic global citizens with personal and professional values which demonstrate a strong sense of ethical, social, intercultural and environmental responsibility. |
|                           | <b>Attribute Seven</b>   |
|                           | Adaptability, self-awareness, reflection and emotional intelligence  |
|                           | TUS graduates will be self-aware, autonomous and resilient lifelong students who exhibit courage, passion and self-respect and are committed to acting with integrity and their own personal and professional development.   |

## SECTION 3: TUS CURRICULUM DESIGN FRAMEWORK

### 3.1 Introduction to the TUS Curriculum Design Framework

The establishment of TUS comes at a time of profound change in Higher Education (HE) which dates back to the Bologna process but has been expedited in recent times. The timing of the introduction of this new TU onto the Irish HE landscape, provides an opportunity to focus particularly on the curriculum and select a curriculum framework that will serve both the mission and the educational philosophy of the University. The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 notes the major role that higher education will play in developing Irish society and a knowledge-based economy over the coming decades.<sup>8</sup> Central to achieving this potential is the quality of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes across a range of disciplines. Therefore, TUS will embed professional skills within curricula, such as critical thinking, problem solving, creativity, teamwork, and communication skills, which are required in the contemporary workplace and for active citizenship.<sup>9</sup>

The curriculum is used as a heuristic object for understanding the construction of knowledge, how it is selected, recontextualised and transmitted in a teaching context. The development of relevant and requisite skills and competences in keeping with QQI and professional body requirements are also key elements when creating curricula of relevance to our communities, society, and the economy.<sup>10</sup>

TUS commits to a framework for an internationalised curriculum that is values-driven with overarching principles and a focus on knowledge creation, co-creation and intellectual leadership. The University will commit to inclusive and student-centred models of curriculum design. The framework will allow for different approaches to include linear sequencing, spiral curriculum sequencing, thematic sequencing, and backward design sequencing.

The framework will be strengthened by six key principles which include a commitment to: creativity, innovation, access and progression, responsiveness, inclusivity and global perspectives (Figure 3 overleaf). The curriculum framework of TUS will be reflexive, in order to be responsive to change. It will, however, also be evidence-based using data driven approaches in order to inform continuous review. This will also inform the feasibility of new offerings and ensure the University provides progression

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<sup>8</sup> (Department of Education and Skills, 2016)

<sup>9</sup> (OECD, 2019)

<sup>10</sup> (Barrier, Quéré, & Vanneville, 2019)

pathways at all levels on the framework, which range from micro-credentials to full degree programmes.

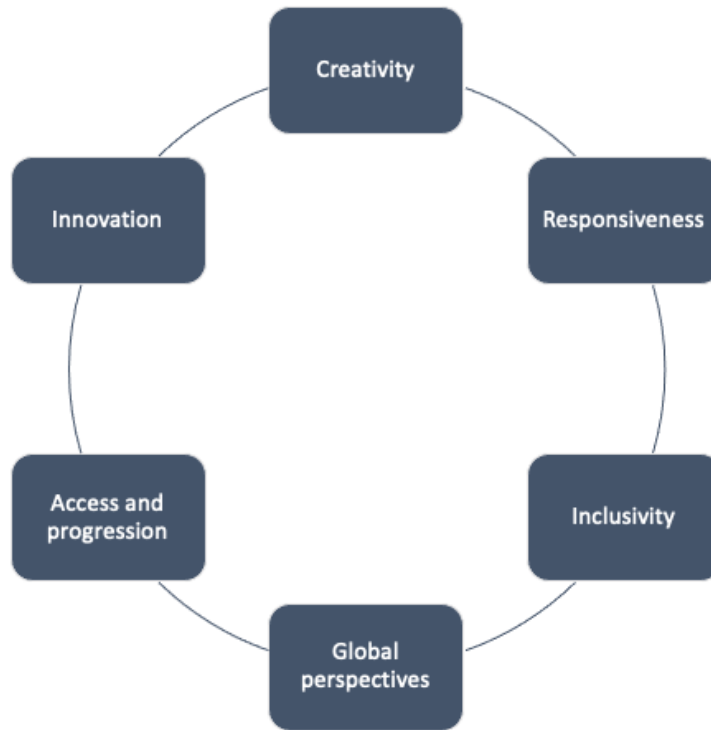


Figure 3 TUS Principles for Curriculum Design

The framework will focus on balancing the elements that are required for a Technological University to maintain a portfolio of offerings. These elements often provide tensions in the curriculum design process, which requires creativity and innovation in addition to agility and efficiency throughout the design and approvals process.

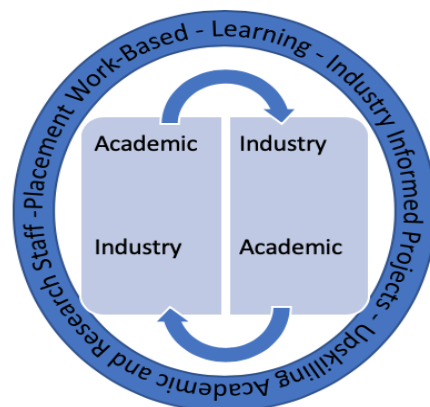


Figure 4 TUS symbiotic relationship with industry

Developing a symbiotic approach between the University and industry will be required to remain current, with the key activities identified, leading to opportunities for mutual partnership and development as indicated previously in Figure 4.

The curriculum design and approvals process will see greater autonomy and in turn devolved responsibility residing at faculty level, to ensure the quality of provision is enhanced and maintained. Adopting this approach will add agility to processes allowing, where appropriate, TUS to be a responsive and disruptive innovator, whilst sustaining the organisation and its reputation as a centre of excellence into the future.<sup>11</sup>

### **3.2 Approaches to Curriculum Design**

Different approaches to designing curriculum will be embraced in TUS, depending on the disciplinary needs and current best practice to achieve the most positive outcome for student engagement. See curriculum design approaches below (Figure 5).

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<sup>11</sup> (Snow Andrade, 2016)

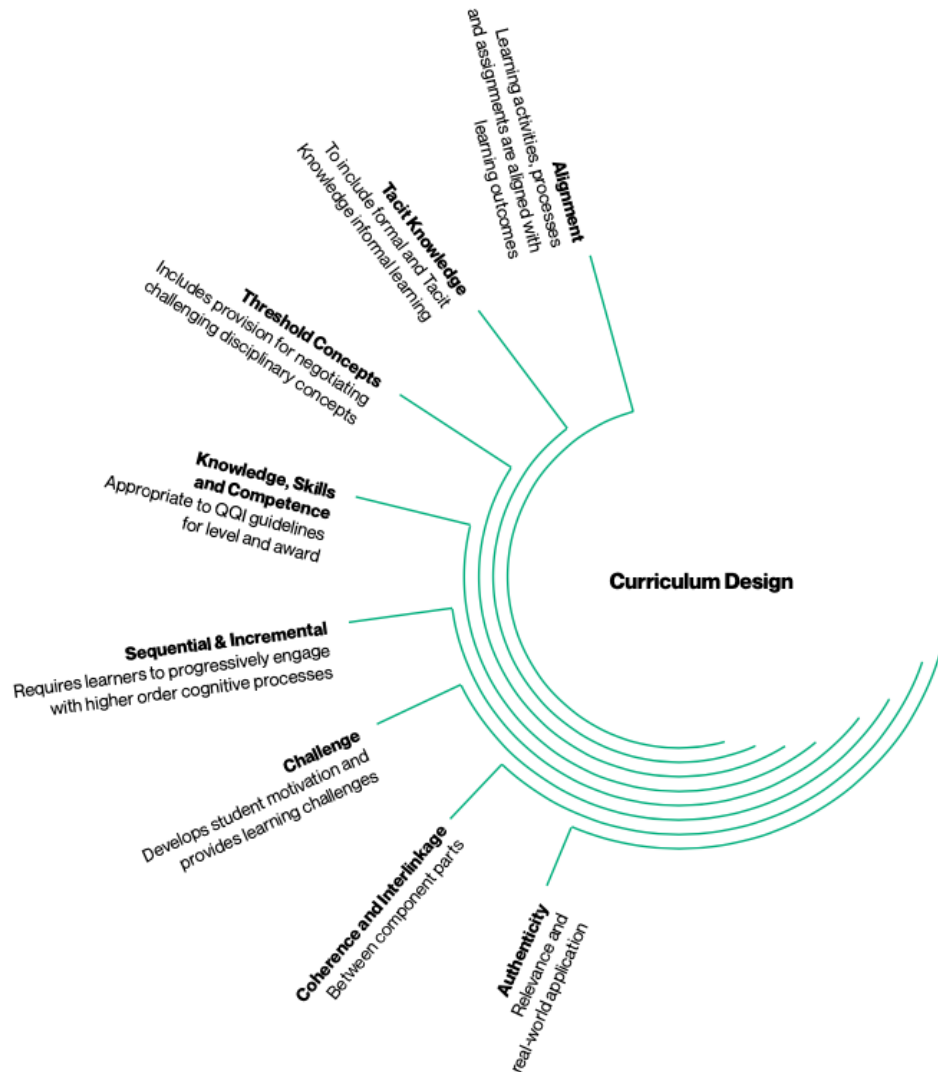


Figure 5 TUS Curriculum Design Approaches

Curriculum design occurs in the context of embracing and achieving the values and outcomes implicit in the overall educational philosophy of the University through: enhancing engagement with innovation and excellence in learning and teaching; a student-centred active learning approach; a focus on applied learning and the development of employability skills; supporting personal development and growth of the whole person; effective assessment practices that promote deeper learning; inclusive, engaging and supportive learning environment; fostering a culture which enhances research capacity; and developing and embedding a culture of quality

enhancement. The University is committed to designing authentic assessment practices, where assessment is designed to “mirror real-life uses of the discipline”<sup>12</sup>

In addition, the University is committed to providing an inclusive approach to curriculum design which is based on the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), a framework that allows educators to apply a flexible approach to learning, teaching and assessment, for a diverse student population. Therefore, application of UDL to our curriculum design, including learning, teaching and assessment approaches, will help to create a more inclusive and accessible learning environment. A direct result of a UDL approach is accessibility for all learners, with more student-centred learning experiences.<sup>13</sup> UDL improves learning opportunities for all students, encouraging them to become more responsible participants in their learning.<sup>14</sup>

An essential aspect of programme design will be a commitment to students developing appropriate industry-led digital capabilities for living, learning and working in a digital age.<sup>15</sup> TUS is cognisant that at a national and European level, the enhancement of digital skills for staff and students is a key factor in the provision of an enriched learning experience in higher education.<sup>16</sup> Digital classroom technologies offer the potential to provide adaptable modes of delivery which complements the learning environment and enhances the learning experience of full-time, part-time and life-long learning students where appropriate. TUS is committed to enabling the selective integration of digital technologies for learning in undergraduate, postgraduate and flexible programme provision, considered a fundamental prerequisite for the deepening of its impact. The integration of digital technology can be structured to support students on different learning paths offering a differentiated learning experience. The effectiveness of digitally enhanced learning depends on how it is incorporated to complement the scholarship of teaching and learning. Provision of supports in the University are a fundamental element to enable capacity building in this domain.<sup>17</sup> These supports include: the development of a comprehensive policy framework to support all aspects of digitally enhanced, blended and online learning; developing the digital infrastructure required for successful delivery and implementation and crucially, supporting staff

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<sup>12</sup> (Carless, 2015)

<sup>13</sup> (CAST, 2021)

<sup>14</sup> (Athlone Institute of Technology, 2021)

<sup>15</sup> (JISC, 2020)

<sup>16</sup> (European Union, 2014)

<sup>17</sup> (European Union, 2019)

develop their digital literacy skills and the application of these in pedagogically informed teaching and learning activities.<sup>18</sup>

Problem-centred and inquiry-led curricula will be designed to incorporate authentic learning experiences with an overall focus on research-informed learning, teaching, and assessment practices.<sup>19</sup> In addition, TUS commits to providing placement experiences, and the use of capstone projects to provide evidence of the achievement of programme learning outcomes.

The curriculum design process can incorporate face-to-face, blended, hybrid and online elements depending on the programme both undergraduate and postgraduate. Involving an internal and external institutional wide collaboration between teaching staff, heads of department, managers, educational developers and technologists, support and library staff, the curriculum design process will also involve external collaboration with relevant stakeholders, including, liaison and research with industry, state agencies, relevant professional bodies, placement agencies and a variety of disciplinary networks. A commitment to rethinking current approaches to timetabling and the nature of student engagement, both on and off campus, will be required. Informed by current research, three key considerations for effective curriculum design will be adhered to which are outlined in Figure 6 below:

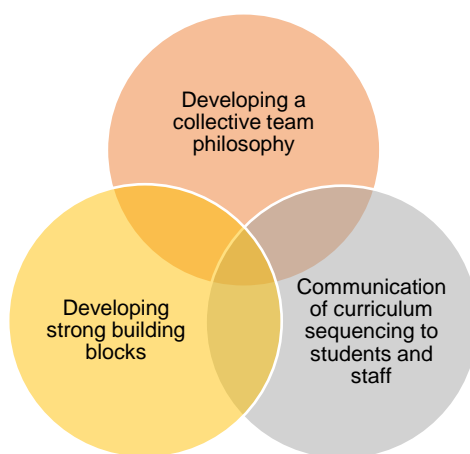


Figure 6 Key Considerations for Curriculum Design in TUS

### 3.2.1 Developing a Collective Team Philosophy for the Programme

This involves the holistic process of making explicit the beliefs and values of the team involved in curriculum design. It is what teachers believe they should be teaching, what

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<sup>18</sup> (European Union, 2017)

<sup>19</sup> (Department of Education and Skills, 2016)

students should be learning, and the respective roles of teachers and students in pursuing both. TUS believes this step is a key starting point for engagement with educational developers, initially at the level of overall programme design, and subsequently at module design level. It may begin with the development of a collaborative vision of the core graduate attributes which should be achieved, and then by designing a curriculum which will achieve these attributes.

### **3.2.2 Developing Strong Building Blocks**

In designing successful curriculum, evidence suggests that successful programmes include core modules, sometimes organised into streams that can be subsequently built on to develop transparent pathways for students. These core building blocks usually have disciplinary specific cognate areas of knowledge, skills and competencies which enable programmes to be complete, cohesive, and integrated.

### **3.2.3 Communication of Curriculum Sequencing to Students and Staff**

This principle encourages the use of curriculum mapping tools for the purpose of making sequencing transparent to students and staff on the programme team. This visual mapping serves the purpose of signposting core building blocks, disciplinary foundations, and creating a coherent visual rationale to highlight the sequencing of curriculum.

The successful implementation of the curriculum framework of TUS, will be reliant on developing the structures that will support staff in the development of the teaching of their discipline including pedagogic knowledge, skills and competence for working in a digital university. This is in keeping with the National Strategy, which recommends that “all higher education institutions must ensure that all teaching staff are both qualified and competent in teaching and learning and should support ongoing development and improvement of their skills”, thus ensuring that every student in TUS will learn in an environment that is informed by research, scholarship and up-to-date practice and knowledge.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> (Department of Education and Skills, 2011)



## SECTION 4: TUS LEARNING, TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT STRATEGY

### 4.1 TUS - A Learning Community of Intellectual and Social Partnership

The TUS - Putting Learning First Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy - enables a learning community of intellectual and social partnership. This strategy is supported through seven key pillars that support excellence in learning, teaching and assessment as indicated in Figure 7.

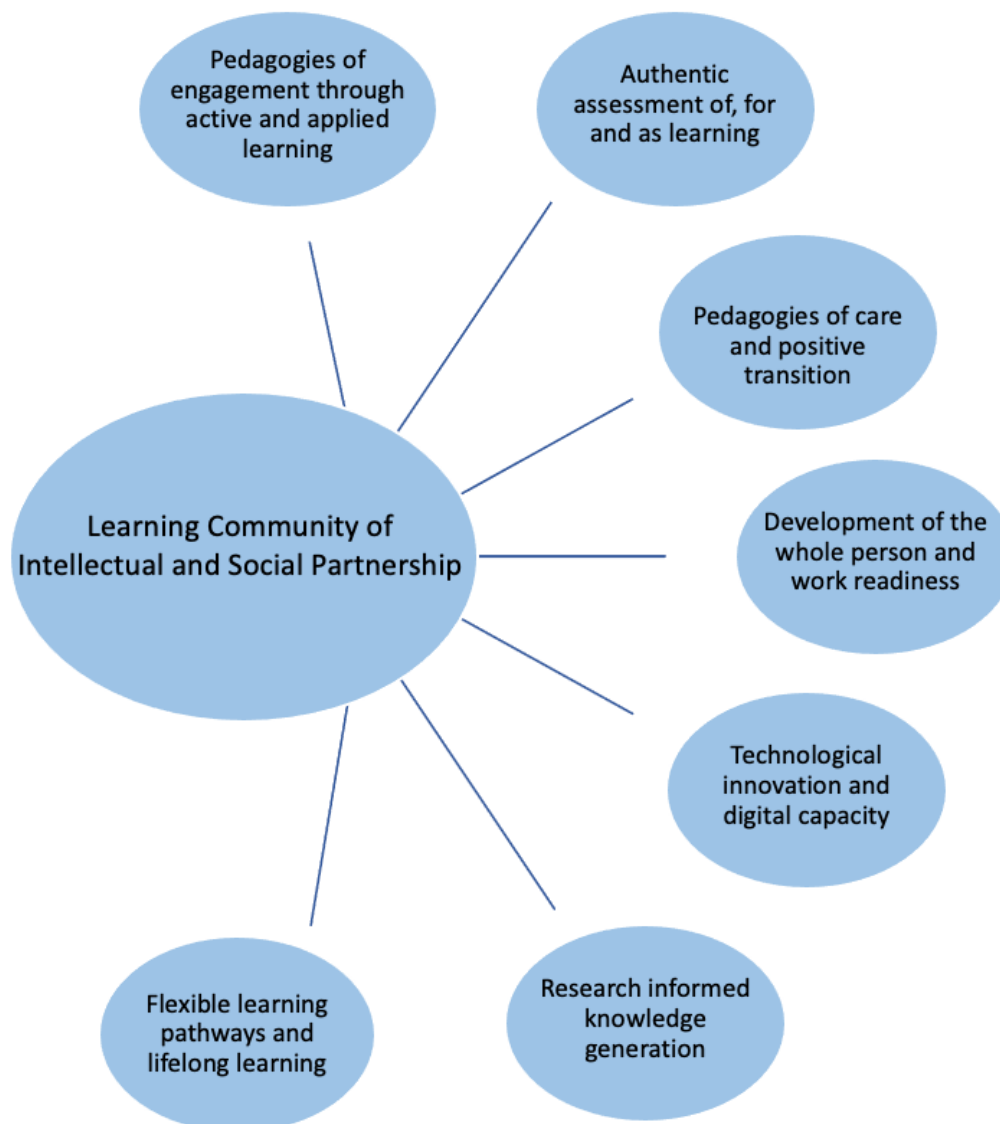


Figure 7 TUS Pillars Supporting Excellence in Learning, Teaching and Assessment

Each of the pillars will be explained and justified separately including goals for development and implementation.

## 4.2 TUS – 7 Pillars Supporting Excellence in Learning, Teaching and Assessment

### 4.2.1 Pillar 1 - Pedagogies of Engagement through active and applied learning

'Pedagogies of Engagement' is an umbrella term for an educational process at TUS where students become vigorously engaged in exploring, assimilating, and constructing knowledge. It has at its heart an active learning dynamic, where diverse models of learning motivate students to take responsibility for their own learning. It also enhances knowledge retention and metacognition because of the deeper levels of engagement associated with knowledge construction.<sup>21</sup> Pedagogies of engagement are enabled in TUS through a variety of interactions: Student to Content, Student to Student, Student to Staff, Student to Industry, Student to Community and Student to Research. They occur along a continuum from individual-based activities to group-based episodes of collaborative engagement, and range from small-scale encounters (pair and share, student presentations) to more extended and sustained active learning strategies such as: Team Based Learning (TBL), Problem Based Learning (PBL), Extended Case-Study Method, and Enquiry Based Learning (EBL). These also incorporate signature pedagogies which enable disciplines to select appropriate learning approaches, including Design Thinking. All of these pedagogies promote the development of advanced cognition, higher order thinking, values development, intrinsic motivation, autonomy, personal mastery, self-responsibility, and psychomotor skills associated with specific disciplinary needs.

Pedagogies of engagement, through active and applied learning, typically embrace: co-constructivist approaches. They engage students at cognitive, psychomotor and affective levels. They are collaborative in nature, and thus embed and enhance learning by engaging students. They lead to the development of higher order thinking and learning through analysis, synthesis and creativity. In addition, pedagogies of engagement enhance the development of interest, attitude, and values relating to learning and where appropriate the development of motor skills to include physical actions, reflexes, interpretive movements, hand-eye coordination and non-discursive communication.<sup>22</sup>

For teaching staff, the facilitation of successful pedagogies for engagement through active and applied learning, require ongoing reflection at all stages of curriculum planning, implementation and evaluation. The University advocates ongoing reflective practice as an embedded component of professional development for teaching staff.

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<sup>21</sup> (Healey, 2013) (Freeman, 2014) (Homes, 2018)

<sup>22</sup> (Hoque, 2017)

| <b>Pillar 1- Pedagogies of Engagement through active and applied learning</b> |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Goals for Development &amp; Implementation</b>                             |   |
| <b>1.</b>   | Continue to engage in University-wide initiatives, that enhance student engagement through active and applied learning, including the use of digital technologies to support learning, teaching and assessment.   |
| <b>2.</b>   | Support faculty to develop and implement best pedagogical skills, using active and applied learning strategies, resulting in 'deep' learning and the development of enhanced metacognition for students.  |
| <b>3.</b>   | Embed best practice principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) in the curriculum design process, particularly inclusive pedagogies of engagement and applied learning, across all stages of design, delivery and assessment.   |
| <b>4.</b>   | Support faculty to design effective, authentic assessment processes that promote student engagement and demonstrate alignment between learning outcomes and associated graduate attributes for respective disciplines.  |
| <b>5.</b>   | Design an equitable and transparent system of recognition for excellence in learning, teaching and assessment.  |
| <b>6.</b>   | Ensure that students are adequately prepared for pedagogies of engagement through programme and modular induction and transition processes and scaffolding for group and teamwork.  |
| <b>7.</b>   | Provide students with frameworks to explore and embed theory-practice linkages arising from real-world 'problem-based learning' and placement experiences at home and abroad.   |
| <b>8.</b>   | Engage students in a wide variety of pedagogies for engagement (individual, pair and group) including: minute papers, student polling, case-studies, demonstrations, guest speakers, workshops, seminars, individual and group presentations, team learning approaches, online and work-based learning. |
| <b>9.</b>   | Encourage staff to conduct research in pedagogies of engagement and present and/or publish in relevant regional and national fora and disseminate within the TU.  |
| <b>10.</b>  | Provide teaching staff with opportunities to engage in CPD, both accredited and non-accredited and nurture Communities of Practice (CoP)s within and across disciplines.  |

#### 4.2.2 Pillar 2 - Authentic Assessment of, for and as Learning

Assessment of, for, and as Learning is a key enhancement theme for The National Forum for Teaching and Learning.<sup>23</sup> In TUS, assessment is a key pillar in supporting student engagement through expanding, exploring and embedding knowledge. Best practice principles of: validity, reliability, practicality, washback on learning, and authenticity underpin the assessment dynamic, which includes formative and summative approaches. As students at TUS progress through their studies, they experience a range of innovative assessment approaches, which reflect disciplinary needs and professional practice requirements.

Assessment of, for, and as Learning is reflected in the continuum of assessment which extends from verification of learning to higher level outcomes involving formative feedback for improvement, self-assessment skills, and authentic assessment opportunities where 'real world' tasks and peer-assessment are enabled. Students are also engaged in active dialogue and evaluative judgement focusing on the: aims of assessment, criteria for success, sharing exemplars of excellence and in providing feedback for teaching staff to guide ongoing improvement. TUS ensures that all assessment processes are quality assured, using best practice principles and procedures. TUS prioritises 'assessment literacy' and associated skill development for staff at all levels of curriculum design, delivery, and implementation. Best practice in assessment will be enhanced through the following practices. Assessment strategies will be designed to capture the key learning outcomes for the module and the programme. They will help students explore, expand and embed knowledge, by including assessment **of, for** and **as** learning to engage students, thus enabling students to self-assess and set goals. Students will be provided with clearly designed assessment briefs and the criteria for success will be shared in advance, for example, through the use of effectively designed rubrics.

Assessment strategies will include formative & summative approaches and will be designed to provide feedback and feedforward opportunities for students which will also inform the continued evolution of learning, teaching and assessment approaches. Excellence of student achievement will be recognised.

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<sup>23</sup> (National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning, 2016 )

| <b>Pillar 2 - Authentic Assessment of, for and as Learning<br/>Goals for Development &amp; Implementation</b> |  |
|---|--|
| <b>1.</b>   | Continue to ensure that programme design, including programmatic review and new programme development, have assessment as a central element of the review and curriculum development process, whereby programme assessment in its totality, reflects current disciplinary needs, whereby assessment promotes the development of desired graduate attributes, relevant to professional practice.                    |
| <b>2.</b>   | Identify best practice, key enablers, and opportunities for the enhancement of authentic assessment practice and the transition from assessment ‘of’ to assessment ‘for’ and ‘as’ learning, underpinned by the principles of Universal Design for Learning   |
| <b>3.</b>   | Enable programme teams to monitor and carefully plan the overall assessment experience for students with due reference to: volume, sequencing, challenge, assessment range (formative and summative) practicality, feedback and administration.  |
| <b>4.</b>   | Prioritise ‘assessment literacy’ and skill development as part of staff CPD for face to face and online learning contexts, to include: best practice principles of assessment design, development of assessment briefs and effective rubrics, effective student feedback reflecting the principles of: accessibility, timeliness, opportunities for dialogue and promotion of self-evaluation skills for students. |
| <b>5.</b>   | Prioritise the development of assessment literacies amongst students, so that students develop self-assessment skills, are engaged in peer discussion about assessment tasks, have opportunities to clarify assessment briefs and become engaged participants in authentic assessment, developing meta-cognitive skills and desired graduate attributes.   |
| <b>6.</b>   | Ensure that the needs of all students and particularly students with special learning requirements are supported in the implementation of assessment processes.  |
| <b>7.</b>   | Support faculty to identify opportunities for authentic assessment practice at the curriculum design stage (modular, cross-modular and programme level).   |
| <b>8.</b>   | Explore and pilot innovative and authentic assessment practices that further the achievement of programme learning outcomes specific to each discipline.   |
| <b>9.</b>   | Support the use of digital technologies for assessment of, and as learning.  |
| <b>10</b>   | Provide accredited and non-accredited CPD to support this pillar.  |

### 4.2.3 Pillar 3 - Pedagogies of Care and Positive Transition

TUS is committed to a pedagogy of care, including supportive transition pedagogies. These will be enabled through an organisational ethos; a set of values and practices (building on the traditions of its founding institutes), which place “human relationality” at the core of our learning and teaching practices. It is a commitment to a socially just, inclusive and enriching learning experience for all our students. It is about an “authentic educator presence” where our pedagogical practice reflects the importance of the social and the relational. It is about creating and nurturing climates of care and self-worth, where our students, teachers and support staff feel valued, respected and connected as part of a learning community of equality, trust and fairness.<sup>24</sup> It is also particularly cognisant of helping our students to make positive transitions into higher education through many different pathways, including: undergraduate full-time, part-time, flexible learning, apprentice, further education or post graduate pathways.<sup>25</sup> It is also about supporting each other as students and staff at times of change, challenge or transition and nurturing the affective values of: ‘empathy, positivity and problem solving’ and places “human wellbeing” at the centre of our human interactions, where care, diversity, community and justice are present within our community of learners.<sup>26</sup>

Care-based pedagogy has now become a significant discourse in Higher Education, serving as a holistic counterpoint to undesirable neo-liberal agendas (preoccupied primarily with measurable outputs, numbers and performativity metrics) where ‘care-less climates’ can sometimes prevail.<sup>27</sup> TUS-MMW (carrying the tradition of its founding institutes) subscribes to the core values of care-based pedagogy, initially identified by Dewey’s (1916) conception of education as a social process, to create a desirable society, enabling participation for the good of all its members on equal terms and; securing flexible readjustment of its institutions. Our commitment to a pedagogy of care and positive transition, also reflects an important linkage with ‘Critical Pedagogy’ where learning processes enable learners (particularly members of oppressed or marginalized groups) to combat social injustice and prejudice.<sup>28</sup> TUS-MM is committed to an ethic of careful recognition of the realities, experiences, histories and knowledges of oppressed communities. It favours and encourages a teacher-student dialogue, where time is given to listening and understanding, to nurturing inclusion, diversity, dignity and democratisation, described as a politics of education that “walks its talk of diversity, equity and inclusion”<sup>29</sup>. Pedagogies of care

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<sup>24</sup> (O’Connell & Ryan, 2021)

<sup>25</sup> (Kift, Nelson, & Clarke, 2010)

<sup>26</sup> (Palahicky, DesBiens, Jeffery, & Webster, 2021)

<sup>27</sup> (Lynch, 2010) (Noddings, 2013)

<sup>28</sup> (Freire, 2014) (Motta & Bennett, 2018)

<sup>29</sup> (Motta & Bennett, 2018)

are incorporated, not just in terms of supporting students to succeed or to motivate them, but also by creating spaces where students can support each other socio-emotionally (Bali, 2021). Pedagogies of care are therefore imbued with values of: empathy, flexibility, adaptability, encouragement, affirmation and empowerment of each person to reach their potential. It embraces everything from the institutional level to the individual level to create a climate for learning in which staff and students can flourish.<sup>30</sup>

| <b>Pillar 3 – Pedagogies of Care &amp; Positive Transition</b> |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Goals for Development &amp; Implementation</b>              |   |
| 1.   | Identify key structures and enablers within the TU that contribute to an ethos of care and positive transition for students at various stages of their learning journey.  |
| 2.   | Resource key agencies of student and staff support, including a relevant suite of student and staff support services that respond to emergent needs.  |
| 3.   | Ensure that our various systems and processes designed to support a care-based pedagogy, are frequently audited, are receptive to feedback and reviewed in terms of their effectiveness.  |
| 4.   | Ensure teaching staff teach the subjects they are qualified or have significant expertise in to teach, so that students can enjoy the best quality educational experience; and teaching staff can bring passion and authenticity to their teaching and learning dynamic.  |
| 4.   | Provide relevant induction to all new and existing staff regarding ‘a pedagogy of care and positive transition’ with opportunities to reflect on the implications for best-practice (welcoming social presence, empathy, approachability, listening, adaptability, respectful interactions, awareness of student support systems and referral processes). |
| 5.   | Design programme assessment strategies with optimum assessments to achieve a balance between reaching required learning outcomes whilst ensuring student and staff wellbeing.   |
| 6.   | Provide students with support in the assessment process to ensure fair treatment in all aspects of formal and formative assessment, including feedback for ongoing improvement.   |

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<sup>30</sup> (O’Connell & Ryan, 2021)

**Pillar 3 – Pedagogies of Care & Positive Transition**

**Goals for Development & Implementation**

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|----|---|
| 7. | Provide programme induction for students, which highlights a commitment to 'a pedagogy of care and positive transition', but also clarifies the student's responsibility in this process including, attendance, enthusiasm, participation, courtesy, pro-active communication and protocols for positive behaviour. |
| 8. | Develop a process for regular 'check ins' with students during their first semester, particularly first year students or students at a significant transition stage.  |
| 9. | Support teaching staff to role-model a pedagogy of care, by nurturing a learning environment of fun, curiosity, experimentation, exploration, humility, patience, support and permission to 'fail and try again' within a community of learning.  |
| 10 | Provide accredited and non-accredited CPD to support this pillar.   |



#### **4.2.4 Pillar 4 - Development of the Whole Person and Work Readiness**

TUS is committed to developing confident, competent, and skilled graduates through engagement with the formal, informal and hidden curriculum. As global citizens, our graduates will play an important part in developing and sustaining a vibrant, successful knowledge economy and society, locally, nationally and internationally. TUS supports students to become involved in volunteering, fundraising and charitable activities as part of their overall development and contribution to active citizenship. The University embeds, as an integral part of the learning experience, attributes that will contribute to the development of the whole person and life-long skills such as adaptability, critical thinking, creativity, teamwork, and problem solving. The integration of human and personal development streams within some programmes is a vital strategy for enhancing the human capital of our graduates, particularly those who will work in people-centred services and professions.

TUS will continue to develop students' professional knowledge, skills and competences through diverse engagement with industry and relevant professional agencies. This may include: site-visits, field-trips, attendance and participation in conferences and professional seminars, exhibitions, guest speakers - both online and face to face. The University will encourage students to participate in, regional, national and international competitions and other networking opportunities.

TUS is also committed to developing and enhancing work-based learning opportunities, including placement at home and overseas, to give students authentic real-world experience that will integrate theory, practice and competencies required for current and future workplace needs. Professional accreditation of a range of TUS's programmes, together with the entitlement for professional body examination exemptions and/or membership, provides students with a real competitive advantage in the employment market. An internationalised curriculum enables students to develop global perspectives and intercultural skills and "cultural intelligence", augmented by the opportunities afforded by inward and outward mobility programmes.<sup>3132</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> (Rose, Ramalu, Uli, & Kumar, 2010)

<sup>32</sup> (SHRM, 2017)

## **Pillar 4 - Development of the Whole Person and Work Readiness**

### **Goals for Development & Implementation**

|            |  |
|------------|--|
| <b>1.</b>  | Use the TUSW Graduate Attributes Framework as a guide to all curriculum planning and student learning experiences, to develop an educated and skilled graduate contributing effectively to the human capacity needs of society.  |
| <b>2.</b>  | Embed, as an integral part of the learning experience, 21 <sup>st</sup> Century skills and attributes (informed by the TU's Graduate Attribute Framework) that will contribute to the development of the whole person and life-long skills such as: adaptability, critical thinking, creativity, teamwork, problem solving, digital capacity and ethical values. |
| <b>3.</b>  | Continue to embed links with industry across programme development processes and further develop the applied nature of programmes.   |
| <b>4.</b>  | Further develop work-based learning opportunities, with well-structured and supported formal Work Placement and/or Work Based Projects opportunities.  |
| <b>5.</b>  | Create opportunities for students to engage in a range of industry and agency professional networking opportunities, relevant to their career development  |
| <b>6.</b>  | Commit to an internationalised home curriculum to ensure access to global perspectives for all students, while also including the potential for increased outward mobility for students and staff.   |
| <b>7.</b>  | Carefully embed and offer some assessment choices that encourage students to develop intercultural intelligence and interpersonal capacities that will enable them to be work-ready in a wide variety of global contexts.  |
| <b>8.</b>  | Encourage and support students to become involved in volunteering, fundraising and charitable activities as part of their overall development and contribution to active citizenship.  |
| <b>9.</b>  | Develop leadership readiness by encouraging pro-active engagement in co- and extra-curricular activities.  |
| <b>10.</b> | Provide accredited and non-accredited CPD to support this pillar.  |

#### 4.2.5 Pillar 5 - Technological Innovation and Digital Capacity

TUS prioritises technological innovation and digital creativity as a key strategic focus to deliver its mission as a dynamic 21<sup>st</sup> century university. The Digital Agenda for Europe states that “digital literacy as a life skill is a key component for building digital capacity”.<sup>33</sup> TUS fully embraces this digital agenda and supports The National Forum’s recommendation to “develop a consistent, seamless and coherent digital experience for students... and actively engage with students and teachers to develop their digital skills and knowledge”.<sup>34</sup> This will be informed by the JISC Digital Capabilities Framework designed for staff and students.<sup>35</sup>

TUS will continue to develop high-capacity infrastructure and platforms to facilitate the development of digitally enhanced learning, teaching and assessment and to expedite digital capacity and creativity across its learning community.

Digital technology will be used to support students on different learning paths, so that content and learning approaches are varied to meet the individual needs of the student. Digitally enhanced learning will be incorporated into coursework to complement the scholarship of teaching and learning in face-to-face, blended, and online contexts.

The integration of digital technologies affords the opportunity to implement a diverse range of ways to deliver content, communicate with and assess students. For students, increased use of digitally enhanced, blended and online learning offers more flexible ways to learn, access information, communicate and complete coursework, and reach their full potential allowing a higher degree of personalisation and learner autonomy. Creating consistency and a seamless student experience is important. By applying principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), and purposefully selecting digital technologies from the TUS digital ecosystem to facilitate achievement of learning outcomes, students will have an engaging and interactive learning experience. Such learning design and sequencing should in turn be aligned to fair and effective assessment practices that promote learning and the development of metacognition.

Teaching staff in the TU will require support in developing confidence in incorporating digital learning technology as a routine part of their professional learning, teaching and assessment practice. The National Professional Development Framework for all Staff

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<sup>33</sup> (European Union, 2014)

<sup>34</sup> (JISC, 2020)

<sup>35</sup> (JISC, 2020)

who Teach in Irish Higher Education<sup>36</sup> and the European Framework for the Digital Competence of Educators allows staff to comprehensively assess and develop their pedagogical digital competence and provides a set of tools that may be used to allow staff develop their digital literacy and professional competencies in line with these professional frameworks. This approach will enable staff to progress along a continuum for the enhancement of skills to transform learning, teaching and assessment experiences, with digital literacy as an integral element of their professional practice<sup>37</sup>.

| <b>Pillar 5 - Technological Innovation and Digital Creativity</b> |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Goals for Development &amp; Implementation</b>                 |  |
| <b>1.</b>   | Continue to develop high-capacity infrastructure and digital ecosystem to facilitate the development of digitally enhanced learning, teaching and assessment and to expedite digital capacity and creativity across its learning community.                        |
| <b>2.</b>   | Develop a coherent digital experience for students and actively engage with students and teachers to develop their digital skills and knowledge.   |
| <b>3.</b>   | Continue to develop digital technologies to enhance student participation, facilitate student digital competence and respond to individual learning needs, particularly innovation in the use of enabling assistive technologies.                                  |
| <b>4.</b>   | Integrate digitally enhanced learning into coursework to complement the scholarship of learning and teaching in face-to-face, blended, and online contexts. Use the TUS Blended and Online Learning Policy to guide new programme design, delivery and assessment. |
| <b>5.</b>   | Support staff to continue developing a range of digital competencies including, professional digital skills and the development of digital resources for enhanced teaching, learning and assessment.   |
| <b>6.</b>   | Support the development of flexible programmes using blended and online learning delivery formats.   |
| <b>7.</b>   | Continually review best practice in technological innovation and digital creativity to further educational outcomes across the TU.   |

<sup>36</sup> (National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning, 2016 )

<sup>37</sup> (Keengwe, 2018)

**Pillar 5 - Technological Innovation and Digital Creativity**

**Goals for Development & Implementation**

|            |  |
|------------|--|
| <b>8.</b>  | Promote the integration of new emerging digital technologies that facilitate innovative and engaging learning and progress digital capacity and skills among staff and students. |
| <b>9.</b>  | Continue to support the development of digital assessment approaches that is informed by research and learning design and upholds the principles of academic integrity.          |
| <b>10.</b> | Provide accredited and non-accredited CPD to support this pillar.  |

#### 4.2.6 Pillar 6 - Research Informed Knowledge Generation

TUS promotes a teaching and learning dynamic that is research informed so that knowledge generation is supported by current research, best practice arising from disciplinary inquiry and the promotion of student and staff engagement in research practice. Teaching staff are encouraged to nurture curiosity, discussion and debate among students regarding current policy developments within their disciplinary domain. They are also encouraged to provide students with the skills to interrogate current research reports, relevant strategic policy direction and to assess the ongoing relationship between policy and practice in their disciplinary domain.

Research and digital information literacy skills including, data and information searching, purposeful and reflective reading, note taking, academic writing, critical thinking, problem solving, policy analysis and evaluation skills are a key component of completing research.

These skills, developed incrementally across programmes and relevant research modules support the completion of final year projects at undergraduate and post graduate levels. Staff and students will be supported to engage in positive and productive research supervision process.

TUS is committed to providing students with undergraduate and post-graduate conference experiences, where students and staff collaborate in organising conference events. TUS staff are encouraged and incentivised to complete doctoral level research, to inform their students and colleagues of relevant aspects of their research journey and to disseminate new knowledge through publication in peer-reviewed journals and through national and international conferences. The University is committed to the development and provision of Open Educational Resources (OERS) supported by relevant licencing protocols.

| <b>Pillar 6 - Research Informed Knowledge Generation</b> |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Goals for Development &amp; Implementation</b>        |   |
| <b>1.</b>  | Promote a learning, teaching and assessment dynamic that is research informed, so that knowledge generation is supported by current research and best practice arising from ongoing disciplinary inquiry. |
| <b>2.</b>  | Ensure that new programme development and programme review processes integrate the most recent advances in knowledge development and knowledge application, at both programme and modular levels.         |

## **Pillar 6 - Research Informed Knowledge Generation**

### **Goals for Development & Implementation**

|            |  |
|------------|--|
| <b>3.</b>  | Promote research and information literacy skills, including, data and digital information search, critical reading, note-taking, academic writing, citation, critical thinking, problem solving and evaluation skills in all undergraduate programmes.   |
| <b>4.</b>  | Support the completion of final year projects and dissertation work, so that students have developed independent research skills and engaged with areas of professional interest, that encourage progression to post-graduate research pathways.   |
| <b>5.</b>  | Provide students with undergraduate and post-graduate conference experiences, where students and staff collaborate in organising conference events.  |
| <b>6.</b>  | Develop research colloquia/industry poster presentations/conference attendance and presentation as a means for students to share research practice and findings from final year projects and dissertations.  |
| <b>7.</b>  | Encourage and incentivise staff to complete doctoral and post-doctoral level research, disseminate relevant aspects of their research with their students and share new knowledge through, OERS, grey papers, publication in peer-reviewed journals and local, national and international conferences. |
| <b>8.</b>  | Facilitate knowledge transfer from research active staff and post-graduate students to the wider TU learning community, through accessible research reports, publications, case studies and conference presentations and information sessions.   |
| <b>9.</b>  | Encourage faculty to collaborate through research partnerships with colleagues across the TU community and through national and international research networks.   |
| <b>10.</b> | Provide accredited and non-accredited CPD to support this pillar.  |

#### 4.2.7 Pillar 7 - Flexible Learning Pathways & Lifelong Learning

TUS is fully committed to implementing recommendation 4 of The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030, which states that: “the Irish higher education system must continue to develop clear routes of progression and transfer, as well as non-traditional entry routes... characterised by flexibility and innovation”.<sup>38</sup> TUS will increase accessibility to Higher Education and increase the participation of a range of diverse students through innovative curriculum provision, flexible learning pathways, distance learning modes.

TUS will provide a flexible model of curriculum provision, where components of its programme portfolio (including relevant credit-based modules), will be available to industry-based clients and those seeking advanced professional development opportunities. Flexible learning pathways, using a credit accumulation system, ranging from micro-credentials to major awards, will be supported by online and blended learning approaches.

TUS will also encourage its own teaching staff to avail of a range of in-house flexible learning programmes that enhance continuous professional development and builds on inter-disciplinary knowledge transfer and skills.

TUS will also implement a transformative and robust Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) policy to encourage, and reward accredited and non-accredited prior learning. This will be a key enabler in ensuring equality of access, progression opportunities and access to advanced lifelong learning that transforms professional development opportunities, for TUS’s learning community.

| <b>Pillar 7 - Flexible Learning Pathways &amp; Lifelong Learning</b> |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Goals for Development &amp; Implementation</b>                    |   |
| <b>1.</b>  | Increase accessibility to Higher Education and the participation of students from diverse backgrounds, through innovative curriculum provision, flexible learning pathways and distance learning modes, to include apprenticeship programmes. |
| <b>2.</b>  | Provide a flexible model of curriculum provision, where components of its programme portfolio will be made available to industry-based clients and those seeking advanced professional development opportunities.                             |

<sup>38</sup> (Department of Education and Skills, 2011)



## **Pillar 7 - Flexible Learning Pathways & Lifelong Learning**

### **Goals for Development & Implementation**

|            |  |
|------------|--|
| <b>3.</b>  | Continue to support flexible learning pathways, including both major, minor and micro-credential awards, through online and blended learning approaches; enabling students to accumulate credits and qualifications in a timeframe that suits their needs. |
| <b>4.</b>  | Grow the portfolio of flexible learning programmes; using blended and online delivery formats to increase learner enrolments in life-long learning.  |
| <b>5.</b>  | Support the development of a broad range of CPD offerings, ranging from digital badges, micro-credentials, minor, supplemental and special and major awards, reflective of different disciplinary domains and societal and industry requirements.          |
| <b>6.</b>  | Continually be proactive in liaison with industry and external agencies to be responsive to emerging market demand for flexible learning programmes.   |
| <b>7.</b>  | Implement its transformative Recognition of Prior Learning Policy (RPL) to enable participants engage in a meaningful education journey, that recognises their prior learning and empowers them to reach their personal and professional potential.        |
| <b>8.</b>  | Be responsive to third age education needs across a range of dynamic life-long learning preferences.   |
| <b>9.</b>  | Implement its transformative Recognition of Prior Learning Policy (RPL) to enable participants engage in a meaningful education journey, that recognises their prior learning and empowers them to reach their personal and professional potential.        |
| <b>10.</b> | Provide accredited and non-accredited CPD to support this pillar including the support of a Community of Practice (CoP) for faculty engaged in part-time.  |

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## **Appendix 1: Development of the Strategy**

This document was developed as a collaborative process arising from the following stages of engagement by key stakeholders:

- 1) Establishment of a joint working group on teaching, learning and assessment as part of the TU application process in Spring 2020.
- 2) The expansion of this working group to research specific components of the TU application including (philosophy and values, graduate attributes, curriculum framework and key pillars of learning, teaching and assessment).
- 3) The reporting of recommendations to the working group and the formulation of the teaching, learning and assessment component for the TU application (June 2020).
- 4) The ongoing liaison with the Academic Steering Group and liaison with other relevant working groups to formulate the basis for developing a draft strategy (Jan - June 2021).
- 5) The completion of a further round of consultation with working groups (Research, International, Apprenticeship and Skills, Digital, Student Union) (May 2021).
- 6) Consultation with members of the TUS Academic Sub-Committee of Teaching & Learning (September 2021 – May 2022).