



TUS

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

Ollscoil Teicneolaíochta na Sionainne:
Lár Tíre Iarthar Láir

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**TUS Policy and Procedures on the Provision of References for
Students/Graduates of the Technological University 2024 – 2027**



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1.0 Introduction

Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest (hereafter also referred to as the Technological University or TUS) aims to be a catalyst for positive change and innovation across regions. It prepares students for future ways of living, learning and working, while building new partnerships that strengthen innovation, and create new and exciting opportunities for communities. TUS has a goal to *“become an accessible, progressive and impactful technological university – a higher education institute that reflects the educational demands and economic needs of the regions and the communities”*. TUS *“aspires to be a contemporary and engaged technological university distinguished by outstanding learner experience, international focus and impactful and applied research. The TU will lead continued social and economic growth for the benefit of the communities it serves”*^[1]. A key Value of TUS is Supportiveness: The Technological University *“will provide a supportive and protective environment for students, staff members and other stakeholders that empowers them to achieve their full potential”*.^[1]

The University and its Staff are committed to the employability and advancement of its Students and Graduates and to meeting the needs of industry and the professions by the supply of suitably qualified graduates. The provision of references, is established practice within TUS and is often an integral component of the recruitment processes of Employers and of Postgraduate Providers.

There are two principal reasons for an employer to request a reference on a prospective employee:

- (a) to confirm the accuracy of statements made in the prospective employee’s application; and
- (b) to provide opinions as to the candidate’s suitability for the position in question and his/her potential for the future.

This Policy and Procedures document has been written as part of the TUS’s commitment to support the career progression of its Students and Graduates. TUS is committed to supporting its Students and Graduates and, where possible, to providing references that help with career progression, recruitment and related career development including transfer to a higher programme of study of another Higher Education Institution. Such reference provision can be in the form of a Technological University Reference and/or an Academic Reference.

2.0 Purpose of this Policy

The Purpose of this Policy is to provide a framework for the provision of references to students/graduates of the TUS. The Policy provides for the provision of a

Technological University Reference and/or Academic Reference and provides detailed guidelines for staff for the preparation and issuing of such references. A sample reference Application Form is provided for students/graduates.

3.0 Scope of this Policy

This policy sets out the guidelines and procedures to be followed by employees of Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest who in their professional capacity as employees of the TUS are requested to provide a Technological University and/or an Academic Reference to Students/Graduates.

In accordance with Section 2 of the Technological Universities Act 2018^[2]:

- (i) *"student, in relation to an institute or technological university, means-*
 - (a) a person registered as a student by the institute or technological university,*
 - or*
 - (b) a full-time officer of the student union who was first elected to his or her office while he or she was registered as a student by the institute or technological university;"*
- (ii) *"graduate' means a person on whom there has been conferred or who has been granted or given an educational award on successful completion of a programme of education and training at an institute or a technological university;"*

The policy outlines the legal considerations, general principles governing the provision of references, and the processes for the acceptance of the request for, and the provision of, a reference to a Student/Graduate. The Policy details the procedures to be followed by students when requesting a reference. The typical contents of a Technological University reference and of Academic Reference are also outlined. A checklist has been developed as a guide so that Staff can benchmark references that align with the recommendations of this Policy (Appendix 1).

4.0 Legal Considerations

- 4.1 There is no legal obligation for a referee to provide a reference, however, referees are under an obligation to use due care when compiling references.
- 4.2 It is important to remember that under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) ^[3] people have a right to request access to their own personal data.

Therefore, referees should always assume that the student/graduate will view the reference.

- 4.3 Always indicate when information given is factual or an opinion.
- 4.4 Always mark the envelope and all correspondence “Private and Confidential”. When sending an email reference, type “Confidential” in the Subject field.
- 4.5 Do not supply any “Special Category Data” without the written permission of the student/graduate. Special category data (defined in Article 9 of (GDPR)^[3]) includes;
 - (a) Race
 - (b) Ethnic origin
 - (c) Politics
 - (d) Religion
 - (e) Trade union membership
 - (f) Genetic data
 - (g) Biometric data
 - (h) Health
 - (i) Sex life
 - (j) Sexual orientation
- 4.6 A reference letter should contain a disclaimer statement in its final paragraph. The following wording for such a disclaimer statement for TUS references is recommended:

“In accordance with the normal practice of Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest, this reference is given in good faith and in confidence, without legal liability on behalf of the author or of Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest”.

It should be noted that, as there is no guarantee that a disclaimer within a reference letter will be successful if challenged in court, due care must be exercised when preparing a reference.
- 4.7 The provision and retention of copies of Technological University or Academic References shall be compliant with the TUS Data Governance Policy^[4], the Data Protection Acts 1988 to 2018^[5] and the General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679^[3].

5.0 General Principles

The following general principles apply to the provision of references:

- 5.1 The provision of a Reference is discretionary and is subject to the agreement of the requested staff member. However, TUS considers it good etiquette to provide references where possible, appropriate and consistent with its core value of being *Supportive* as outlined in the Technological University Application^[1]. There may be an obligation on a person of whom a reference is requested to justify selective grounds for refusal.
- 5.2 Avoid ambiguous or coded language.
- 5.3 Clearly differentiate between statements of fact and opinion. For example, when referring to a student's expected degree result or exam result, this would be an opinion whereas reference to existing achievement and marks is a fact.
- 5.4 Only express opinions that are relevant, and that you are competent to give. When expressing opinions, draw upon experiences of working with or assessing the student, so that you feel confident in justifying your opinions on reasonable grounds.
- 5.5 Unsupported opinions should never be part of a reference.
- 5.6 Statements that cannot be justified should not be made.
- 5.7 Take reasonable skill and care to ensure the accuracy of a reference.
- 5.8 Provide a reference which is in substance true, accurate and fair, and do not give an unfair or misleading impression overall, even if the components are factually correct.
- 5.9 References should be provided on TUS headed paper.
- 5.10 References may be issued via post or via email as acceptable forms of dispatch.
- 5.11 Requests for the completion of template-based references, questionnaires, online forms, as issued by prospective Employers and/or Post-Graduate Providers may arise and may be provided if their content, format, and delivery method is consistent with the recommendations of this Policy.
- 5.12 The TUS and its Staff shall not provide references to employers without the written application and consent of the Student/Graduate. Requests from employers or other parties for confidential references, without the knowledge and expressed approval of the Student/Graduate, should be refused and the requesting parties advised that these requests are not consistent with this policy.

- 5.13 It is strongly recommended that Verbal and/or Oral References are not provided, including on telephone/online platforms, unless the circumstances are rare and exceptional. Information given in this way could easily be subject to misinterpretation. If, in rare and exceptional circumstances, Verbal and/or Oral References are provided, they should be factual and verifiable in nature.
- 5.14 References shall not be provided by the Technological University through Social Media channels.

6.0 Process for the Acceptance of a Request for and Provision of a Reference

The request for and the provision of a Reference must be made in writing by the Student/Graduate using the application format as set out in Appendix 2.

On receipt of a written application for a reference from a Student or Graduate, TUS shall, in reasonable circumstances, facilitate the provision of a reference subject to the general principles as outlined in Section 5.0.

- 6.1 The Student/Graduate submits a written application using the *Sample Reference Application Form* as set out in Appendix 2.
- 6.2 The Student/Graduate signs the declarations contained in the sample Application Form.
- 6.3 A Technological University Reference shall be provided by the Faculty/School Office of the relevant Department.
- 6.4 An Academic Reference should be provided by academic staff members, who are familiar with the relevant academic knowledge, skills and competencies of the requesting Student/Graduate, and who have had significant involvement in the teaching and the welfare of the Student/Graduate. An Academic staff member may request a copy of the Student transcript of grades from the TUS Examinations Office to assist in the writing of a reference.
- 6.5 If accepted, a Technological University and/or Academic Reference should be provided in a timely manner (normally within 2 Weeks following the receipt of the request, during the academic calendar year).
- 6.6 A request for a Technological University/Academic Reference that is not within the guidelines of this policy may be declined.

Applications for a Technological University and/or Academic Reference by a third party should not be provided without consultation with the referent Student/Graduate. Accordingly, the person providing a Technological University and/or Academic

Reference, is under an obligation to consult with the Student/Graduate prior to providing details to a third party.

TUS recognises the exceptional efforts, goodwill and onus assumed by its Academic Staff in providing Academic References for Students and Graduates. From time to time staff development may be offered on the provision of Academic References.

7.0 Content to Include in a Technological University Reference

The content for inclusion in a Technological University Reference should be objective and factual in nature.

7.1 It typically should include the following details:

- a) name and address of the student/graduate;
- b) title of programme being undertaken or completed by student/graduate;
- c) years of attendance;
- d) award(s) obtained;
- e) other content details (e.g. membership of TUS, tutoring activities, Garda vetting (if applicable), work placement activity, TUS activity, good standing, etc.) may be furnished as part of this Technological University Reference, if appropriate;
- f) a disclaimer statement as its final paragraph (C.f. Section 4.6).

7.2 The provider of the Technological University Reference shall be noted as the organisation, namely Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest.

7.3 A copy of the Technological University reference should be retained in the appropriate Faculty/School office in accordance with the Technological University's Data Retention Schedule.

A template for a Technological University Reference is provided in Appendix 3.

8.0 Content to Include in an Academic Reference

8.0 An Academic Reference should be truthful and fair both to the Student/Graduate and the recipient of the Academic Reference.

8.1 An Academic Reference should reflect the academic standing of the Student/Graduate and the academic motivation when completing their studies. Therefore, it should be closely linked, with examples, to the assessed learning

outcomes (knowledge, skills and competencies) of the programme(s) and/or the associated modules that the applicant has completed.

8.2 As a general guideline an Academic Reference should:

- a) identify the capacity of the referee to provide the reference (this should include verification of the fact that the provider of the reference has known the student/graduate for a certain period of time);
- b) include confirmation that the student/graduate is attending or has attended a specific course;
- c) contain reference to the expected Class of degree, or the Class of degree, of the Student/Graduate (if the Class is pending, ensure it is made clear that this is an opinion and not a fact);
- d) include comment on the student/graduate's skills and abilities, including the following:
 - performance in specific discipline/modules;
 - participation in Programme/Technological University activities;
 - participation in TUS Committees and quality assurance fora;
 - academic awards;
 - peer-review research publications;
 - membership of professional bodies;
 - work experience;
 - career interests;
 - involvement in extra-curricular activities/interests;
 - overall impact and demeanour.
- e) contain a disclaimer statement in its final paragraph (C.f. Section 4.6).

8.3 The Staff member providing an Academic Reference shall be identified as its author.

8.4 A copy of the Academic Reference should be retained by the Staff member providing the reference in accordance with the Technological University's Data Governance Policy^[4].

A template for an Academic Reference is provided in Appendix 4 while a Sample Academic Reference is provided in Appendix 5.

9.0 Bibliography

- [1] Application for Designation as a Technological University. AIT – LIT Consortium.
- [2] [Technological Universities Act](#) 2018
- [3] [General Data Protection Regulation](#) (EU) 2016/679
- [4] TUS Data Governance Policy.
- [5] [Data Protection Acts](#) 1988 to 2018

10. Appendices

Appendix 1: A Checklist for Accepting and Providing References

Appendix 2: Sample Reference Application Form

Appendix 3: Template for a Technological University Reference

Appendix 4 Template for an Academic Reference

Appendix 5: Sample Academic Reference

Appendix 1: A Checklist for Accepting and Providing References

A) Acceptance of Request to Provide a Reference

Key Considerations	Yes x	No x
Was consent sought by the Applicant and given by the referee to act as a referee for the Applicant?	☒	☐
Has the Applicant submitted a request for a reference in writing using the Sample Reference Application Form and signed the associated declarations?	☐	☐
Does the referee know the applicant sufficiently to provide the requested reference?	☐	☐
Does the referee have sufficient information to complete the requested reference?	☐	☐

B) Provision of a Reference

Key Considerations	Yes x	No x
Has the referee read the <i>Legal Considerations</i> as outlined in Section 4.0 of this TUS Policy on the <i>Provision of References to Students/Graduates</i> ?	☐	☐
Does the Reference adhere to the general guidelines and content for a Technological University and/or Academic reference, as outlined in Section 7.0 and Section 8.0 respectively, of this TUS <i>Policy on the Provision of References to Students/Graduates</i> ?	☐	☐
Does the Reference clearly differentiate between statements of fact and opinion?	☐	☐
Are all the facts on which the reference is based verifiable?	☐	☐
Does the Reference include the Disclaimer statement as outlined in Section 4.6 of this TUS <i>Policy on the Provision of References to Students/Graduates</i> ?	☐	☐
Has provision been made for retention and storage of the Reference in accordance with this TUS <i>Policy on the Provision of References to Students/Graduates</i> and the <i>TUS Governance Policy</i> ?	☐	☐

Appendix 2: Sample Reference Application Form

Date: ____/____/____

To Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest,

I hereby apply for a **[Technological University Reference]** and/or **[Academic Reference]** from TUS.

Applicant Name:	
Student Number:	
Address:	
Telephone No:	
Programme of Study	
Year(s) of Study at TÚS: Midlands Midwest	
Graduation Date (if Applicable)	
Name of Organisation that may directly request a Reference (if applicable)	

I have read and I accept the TUS *Policy and Procedures on the Provision of References for Students/Graduates of Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest*.

I understand that Technological University/Academic References are given in good faith and to the best of the author's knowledge, information and belief, but with no legal liability on the part of Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest or the author of the reference. It is written and accepted on this basis. The information contained in the reference is confidential within the guidelines set out in the Data Protection Acts.

Date: ____/____/____

X

Signature

Appendix 3: Template for a Technological University Reference

(Technological University reference to be provided on TUS Headed Paper)

[Insert Address of Receiving Organisation]

Date: ____/____/____

Re: [Insert Name and Address of Student/Graduate]

Dear xxxxxxxxx

This is to certify that [*Insert name of Student/Graduate*] is/has
[attending/attended] the [*Insert Programme Title*] in between [*Insert relevant
time period*].

[Insert academic standing details (Student) or grade of award (Graduate)]

[Insert *Other Content Details* as appropriate (C.f. Section 7.1 d)]

As regards personal conduct, [*Insert name of Student/Graduate*] was at all times
in good standing with the Technological University.

In accordance with the normal practice of Technological University of the Shannon:
Midlands Midwest, this reference is given in good faith and in confidence, without
legal liability on behalf of the author or of Technological University of the Shannon:
Midlands Midwest.

Yours sincerely,

X

Signature

Dean of Faculty/School/Head of Department

Print Name:

Appendix 4: Template for an Academic Reference

(Academic reference to be provided on TUS Headed Paper)

[Insert Address of Receiving Organisation]

Date: ____/____/____

Re: [Insert Name and Address of Student/Graduate]

Dear xxxxxxxxx

[Insert Factual Information]

I have known *[Insert name of Student/Graduate]* in my capacity as *[Insert details of context in which the Referee knows the Student/Graduate]*. *[Insert name of Student/Graduate]* is/has *[attending/attended]* the *[Insert Programme Title]* in Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest, between *[Insert relevant time period]*.

[Insert Academic standing details (Student) or grade of award (Graduate)]

[Insert Opinion Based Information supported by relevant examples cited (C.f. Section 8.3 (iv))]

In accordance with the normal practice of Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest, this reference is given in good faith and in confidence, without legal liability on behalf of the author or of Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest.

Yours sincerely,

X

Signature

Print Name:

Job Title:

Appendix 5: Sample Academic Reference

(Academic reference to be provided On TUS Headed Paper)

[Insert Address of Receiving Organisation]

Date: ____/____/____

Re: [Insert Name and Address of Student/Graduate]

Dear xxxxxxxxx

I had the pleasure of teaching [Jane Doe] for the past three years, as she pursued her Bachelor of Business Studies Programme at TUS.

Overall, Jane is highly intelligent and has good analytical skills. Her course project on business planning practice, demonstrated her ability to comprehend difficult course material and apply it to real life business problems. Jane's overall intelligence is also reflected in her grades for the course, and she ranks in the top 10% of our business programme.

Jane has excellent communication skills, and her written work is both clear and concise. She also demonstrated good teamwork skills in group assignments.

On a personal note, I found Jane to be a well-mannered, disciplined, industrious student with a pleasant personality.

Jane has proven herself to have perseverance, initiative and intellectual creativity. Therefore, I have no hesitation in recommending Jane. If her performance in my class is a good indication of how she would perform in the workplace, she will be an extremely positive asset to your company.

In accordance with the normal practice of Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest, this reference is given in good faith and in confidence, without legal liability on behalf of the author or of Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest.

Yours sincerely,

X

Signature

Print Name:

Job Title:

