



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 External Validation Panel

for the

Higher Certificate in Business in Procurement, Logistics & Supply Chain
Management (Level 6)

Bachelor of Business in Sustainable Procurement, Logistics & Supply Chain
Management (Level 7 Add-on)

Bachelor of Business (Hons) in Strategic Procurement, Logistics & Supply
Chain Management (Level 8 Add-on)

Monday 17th June 2024

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report outlines, in summary form, the proceedings of the external validation visit for the *Higher Certificate in Business in Procurement, Logistics & Supply Chain Management*, *Bachelor of Business in Sustainable Procurement, Logistics & Supply Chain Management* and *Bachelor of Business (Hons) in Strategic Procurement, Logistics & Supply Chain Management* in the Department of Lifelong Learning, and includes the findings of the External Validation Panel conducted on the 17th of June 2024. The external validation visit was undertaken in accordance with TUS Academic Regulations. An external validation panel makes an independent impartial judgement on the proposed programmes.

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	17 th June 2024

2.2 Programmes Evaluated

Award Title	Higher Certificate
Programme Title	Higher Certificate in Business in Procurement, Logistics and Supply Chain Management
NFQ Level	Level 6
ECTS Credits	120
Delivery Mode	Full-time, Online
Duration	2 years
Proposed Starting Date	September 2024
Contact	Mr. Seadna Ryan

Award Title	Bachelor of Business
Programme Title	Bachelor of Business in Sustainable Procurement, Logistics and Supply Chain Management
NFQ Level	Level 7
ECTS Credits	60
Delivery Mode	Full-time, Online
Duration	1 year
Proposed Starting Date	September 2024
Contact	Mr. Seadna Ryan

Award Title	Bachelor of Business (Honours)
Programme Title	Bachelor of Business (Honours) in Strategic Procurement, Logistics and Supply Chain Management
NFQ Level	Level 8
ECTS Credits	60
Delivery Mode	Full-time, Online
Duration	1 year
Proposed Starting Date	September 2024
Contact	Mr. Seadna Ryan

2.3 External Validation Panel of Expert Assessors

Name	Affiliation
Mr John Vickery	Former Registrar, Institute of Technology, Tallaght (Chairperson)
Dr Michael Barrett	Head of School of Business & Social Studies, Atlantic Technological University (ATU), Sligo
Mr Ger Long	Head of Department of Accounting and Economics, South East Technological University (SETU), Waterford
Mr Cathal Kearney	Retired Head of School of Business and Humanities, Dundalk Institute of Technology
Mr Patrick Claffey	Director, QMP Consulting

Secretary to Panel: Dr. Brendan Murphy, Head of Quality Assurance & Enhancement, TUS.

2.4 TUS Staff

Name	Affiliation
Dr Michael Tobin	Dean of Faculty of Continuing, Professional Online & Distance Learning
Seadna Ryan	Head of Department of Lifelong Learning
Programme Team: Declan Doran Kevin Farrell Shona Stewart Jim Gilchrist Sharon Byrne Gayle Tarmey Rizwan Ahmed Imelda Rea Elaine Burke	

3.0 FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF EXTERNAL VALIDATION PANEL

3.1 Main Findings

The External Validation Panel of Assessors recommends approval of the proposed:

- Higher Certificate in Business in Procurement, Logistics and Supply Chain Management (Level 6, 120 ECTS);
- Bachelor of Business in Sustainable Procurement, Logistics and Supply Chain Management (Level 7, Add-on, 60 ECTS);
- Bachelor of Business (Honours) in Strategic Procurement, Logistics and Supply Chain Management (Level 8, Add-on, 60 ECTS)

subject to the recommendations as specified in Section 3.3.

3.2 Conditions

No conditions apply.

3.3 Recommendations

- 1) Revise the Admissions criteria to make the entry requirements more explicit with respect to qualification requirements and clarify the English language requirements (IELTS 6.0). Include reference to:
 - a) cognate entry requirements for the Level 7 and Level 8 programmes, and
 - b) equivalency with the Common European Framework of References for Languages (CEFR).
- 2) Revise the Employability section of the Level 7 and Level 8 Add-on Programme documents to further differentiate and make explicit the typical employment roles of Level 7 and Level 8 graduates.
- 3) Make more explicit the Business content of the programme, to further align with the Business Award Standard (areas such as learning on marketing, organisational design, entrepreneurship digital literacy skills are identified as examples of where the learning could be made more explicit).
- 4) Further develop the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategies of the individual modules to include detail on:
 - a) how the overall Teaching, Learning and Assessment strategy is implemented in the individual Module Teaching, Learning and Assessment strategies. This includes

the use of innovative pedagogies, Universal Design for Learning and diversity of assessment modes such as MCQ's, among others.

- b) how students are supported in their learning in the Programme and individual Module Teaching and Learning Strategies, including the use of feedback sessions and asynchronous learning resources.
 - c) the use of expert external industry input during the delivery of the programme including guest lecturers
- 5) Provide further detail in the documentation on the role of the Advisors that support student retention.
 - 6) Review how the weekly specification of independent learning hours is calculated in relation to the total learning required by the specified ECTS and the balance of directed learning.
 - 7) Specify in the Module Assessment strategies the 'Form' of the assessment, as Individual or Group. Include details of where MCQ's are used.
 - 8) Consider the use of time limited Proctored Examinations as a component of the diversifying of assessment modes going forward.
 - 9) Remove the text content in the Programme document under the Heading 'Collaborative or Transnational Provision' as the programme does not fall into this category of provision.
 - 10) Include reference to future trends and contemporary issues across all modules.
 - 11) Proofread the programme documentation to ensure that typographical errors are corrected in the final documents.
 - 12) Consider seeking recognition of the programme by relevant sectoral bodies.

Module Specific Recommendations

- 13) Address the following Module Specific Recommendations
 - a) Review the use of active verbs and align with blooms taxonomy, for the following modules/LO's:
 - Stage 1, *Leadership and Management Development* (LO1);
 - Stage 3, *Lean Project Management for Supply Chains* (LO1);
 - Stage 3, *Strategic Procurement and Supply Chain Management and Innovation* (LO1);
 - Stage 3, *Commercial Relationships and Stakeholder Management* (LO1, LO5, LO6);
 - Stage 4, *Intelligent Technologies in Procurement and Supply Chains* (LO1).

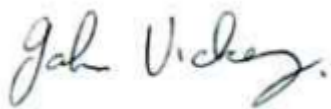
- b) Consider adding '*Introduction to*' to the title of the Stage 2 Module, *Financial and Management Accounting for Business* to better reflect the module content and focus. Review the assessment strategies accordingly.
- c) Consider how the formal presentation of the Stage 3, *Strategic Procurement and Supply Chain Management and Innovation* module can be linked to a written report.
- d) Revise the learning outcomes of the Stage 3 module, *Sustainable Supply Chain Systems* to better reflect the module content and broaden the focus from transport.
- e) Include reference to 'next generation 5.0' in the Stage 4 module, *Intelligent Technologies in Procurement and Supply Chains*
- f) Update the reading resources of the Stage 4 module *Decision Making and Business Analytics* to the most up-to-date available.

3.4 Commendations and Observations

The Panel commend:

- 1) the evident strategic focus of the programme, fulfilling regional needs and aligned with TUS strategy;
- 2) the creation of an important flexible learning pathway for prospective students enabling upskilling employees of the sector;
- 3) the innovative use of a Community of Practice model to support staff CPD;
- 4) the comprehensive programme documentation which is detailed and well developed;
- 5) the consistent use of blooms taxonomy for the writing of learning outcomes and use of up to date learning resources is particularly noted;
- 6) the significant engagement and consultation with external stakeholders during the development of the programme;
- 7) the extensive expertise and experience of the programme team, both academic and industry;
- 8) the positive engagement, enthusiasm, dedication, and team spirit exhibited by the programme team during the validation visit.

Signature of Chairperson



Date: 13/08/2024

4.0 APPENDIX

09.00 am PRIVATE MEETING OF THE PANEL OF ASSESSORS

The panel of assessors met via Microsoft Teams on the 17th of June 2024. The Chairperson, Mr John Vickery, welcomed all members and outlined the purpose and context of the meeting and noted that the panel acts on behalf of Academic Council to validate new programmes for the University. The Chairperson identified the process as a key part of the Quality Assurance process with respect to new programme development.

The Chairperson asked the panel to introduce themselves and to give their initial impressions with respect to the programmes and the documentation. The panel agreed that the documentation was professional and very well presented. Members of the panel identified areas for further discussion with Management and the Programme Team. An important consideration would be to explore if there is sufficient core business modules included in the curriculum. Additional areas identified to explore further included the Admissions Requirements, Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategies and employability descriptors for the respective awards. The Chairperson and panel agreed the general areas of discussion with the Management and Programme team for the respective sessions.

The Chairperson highlighted that the panel was all-male and queried this with the Secretary to the Panel. The Secretary to the panel advised that it is TUS policy to prioritise gender balance in all panels and this is usually an important consideration in panel selection. It was noted that a single gender panel would not be the norm.

The Chairperson and the panel adopted the proposed agenda for the day.

9.30 am MEETING WITH TUS MANAGEMENT

Dr. Michael Tobin, Dean of Faculty of Continuing, Professional Online & Distance Learning and Mr. Seadna Ryan, Head of Department of Lifelong Learning (CPODL) joined the meeting. The panel members introduced themselves. The Chairperson thanked the University for the opportunity to review the proposed programmes. Dr Michael Tobin expressed his gratitude to the panel for reviewing the programme documentation in a shortened timeframe and for participating in the validation panel.

Dr. Michael Tobin delivered a presentation providing an insight into the work of the Faculty of CPODL, its structure, funding streams, industry connections, use of Community of Practice model and its future development plans. Dr. Tobin outlined that the department was seeking to validate three Business programmes in the area of Procurement Logistics and Supply Chain Management. Dr. Tobin outlined student numbers, entry requirements, graduate attributes, progression pathways, programme aims, assessment methods and workplace readiness. It was noted that a Proctoria artificial intelligence proctored examination system will be piloted for the final Examinations during the upcoming academic year. The chairperson thanked Dr. Tobin for the detailed presentation. The panel noted that incorporating some time limited Proctored Examinations as a component of the diversifying of assessment modes going forward.

The strategic context for the development of Business programmes in Procurement, Logistics and Supply Chain Management was outlined. It was noted that the programmes are designed in consultation with industry to meet current and future needs with an integration of transferable and transversal skills. New modules created specifically for the programmes were highlighted and it was noted that existing modules had recently been through programmatic review. There has been a reduction in fee paying students because of Springboard and Skillnet.

The Chairperson thanked the management team for their presentation and noted that the documentation was comprehensive. The panel queried the defined assessment structure with fixed number of Final Exams. The management team outlined that the department had undertaken a project to explore and develop a kaleidoscope of assessment options across its programmes. While the assessment strategy is defined, the Faculty feels that it is balanced with multiple assessment modalities used to evaluate learning outcomes, including case studies, MCQs, and practical workplace examinations. A key priority for

the Faculty is to develop state of the art online teaching, learning and assessment methodologies, as evidenced by the Community of Practice day for lecturers, which helps them to share experience and develop skills to provide the best online learning experience for students. The panel queried equity of learning experience for students who might not be in employment. The management team confirmed appropriate Case Studies have been developed for students who are not in employment, enabling them to achieve the same learning outcomes as those who can apply their learning in the workplace.

The panel queried how the online delivery mode is developed and supported. It was noted that a 10-credit module typically includes two hours of synchronous learning and two hours of asynchronous learning each week. There is also a dedicated one hour per week to for providing student feedback. Additionally, lecturers are required to participate in a Community of Practice session every two weeks and attend two Saturday training sessions annually. The Faculty employs two Student Advisors to support learners and monitor their engagement. The Chairperson noted that this information was not clearly outlined in the documentation and suggested including it in the teaching and learning section of the programme/relevant modules.

The Chairperson thanked the Management team for their time and input and called this session to a close.

10.15am MEETING WITH THE PROGRAMME TEAM

The Chairperson welcomed the programme team to the meeting and both the panel members and the programme team introduced themselves and outlined their areas of expertise. The Chairperson opened the discussion by commending the team for their work on the proposed programme documentation, noting it is detailed and of high quality. The Chairperson particularly praised the team for aligning the module learning outcomes with Bloom's Taxonomy (except for a very small number of examples which would be highlighted in the report).

The management team confirmed to the panel that Year 1 of the Higher Certificate is the existing Special Purpose Award, *Level 6, Certificate in Logistics and Supply Chain Management*, while Years 2, 3, and 4 are new Stages developed for the respective awards.

The programme team provided a background to the differentiation between the roles that a Level 7 and Level 8 graduate would fill within an organisation. The Chair recommended that this be made more explicit across both documents.

The programme team confirmed that Stage 1, currently offered as a Springboard funded Level 6, Certificate, Special Purpose Award, currently has approximately 100 students registered. The aim is to target 35-40 students for year two, with an expectation that in excess of 30 would progress to years three and four. It was noted that there would be realistic numbers given that Certificate programme is Springboard funded. As students are dispersed nationally, the course is exclusively delivered online with no on-campus visits.

Entry Requirements

The panel discussed aspects of the admissions requirements with the programme team. The panel noted that the English language requirements should refer to the Common European Framework of References for Languages (CEFR), in addition to IELTS. Additionally, the minimum IELTS score should be clarified with an IELTS of 6.0 recommended.

The panel also noted that the documentation needs to provide clear information regarding entry into the respective programmes with an Advanced Certificate, Higher Certificate or Bachelor's degree. The programme team was advised to use the term 'cognate' when referring to the entry requirement qualifications for the respective levels to ensure that the student has a grounding in Business.

Teaching, Learning and Assessment

The programme team provided an overview of the Teaching, Learning and Assessment strategy, which is informed by effective practice for online learning. For each 10 ECTS module, the online teaching schedule consists of two hours synchronous delivery and two hours asynchronous delivery. The synchronous delivery consists of online lectures via Zoom. The asynchronous delivery involves the student engaging in a structured learning schedule consisting of pre and post-lecture learning activities and resources, available to the student via Moodle. The Faculty encourages Universal Design for Learning and champions the use of a variety of ways to represent information, acknowledging that adult

learners have diverse learning styles and preferences. The Faculty also has dedicated Student Advisors who are available to meet with and support students with online learning and Student Advisors present at the meeting provided the panel with an overview of their work. The panel advised that it would be beneficial to provide further detail in the documentation on the role of the Advisors in supporting students and their retention.

The TUS Teaching and Learning strategies and Graduate Attributes Framework was also referenced as providing important reference points. A general discussion took place around the format of open/closed book examinations and the use of a kaleidoscope of assessments and training around Artificial Intelligence (AI). The programme team outlined that at a Faculty level they encourage AI in creating videos and slide shows for classes. AI is taught to students looking at large data sets, patterns, and for generating ideas. In terms of potential misuse AI, the Faculty regularly communicate with students regarding what is acceptable and not. There are academic regulations for taught programmes that cover AI. The area is under continuous review which and students are aware of penalties associated with the misuse of AI.

The programme team informed the panel that they recently formalised their methodology regarding guest lecturers during a Community of Practice session. Guest lecturers will now feature in Weeks 7 & 8 across all modules. It was noted that all part-time lecturers are working in industry and are experts in their fields.

The panel noted that the Teaching, Learning and Assessment strategies in the modules are generic as written. It would be beneficial if how the overall Teaching, Learning and Assessment strategy is implemented in the individual Module Teaching, Learning and Assessment strategies was further articulated. This includes the use of innovative pedagogies, Universal Design for Learning and diversity of assessment modes such as multiple-choice questions (MCQ's), among others. It should also include reference to how students are supported in their learning, including the use of feedback sessions and asynchronous learning resources. The Chairperson also noted that the programme team should review all of the modules to ensure correct specification in the Module Assessment strategies of the 'Form' of the assessment, as either Individual or Group.

The Curriculum

The panel enquired if there is sufficient business learning across the programme. A discussion took place around the extent of core business modules provided to justify a Level 7/Level 8 business qualification and its alignment with the Business Award Standard. The programme team highlighted that marketing concepts, corporate governance and entrepreneurship/intrapreneurship are integrated across various modules. They also explained the department's approach to developing new modules, noting that all existing modules were updated during a recent programmatic review. The panel advised the programme team that it would be important to make more explicit the Business content of the programme, to further align with the Business Award Standard. Further learning on areas such as 'marketing', 'organisational design', 'entrepreneurship' and 'digital literacy skills' were identified as examples of where such learning could be made more explicit.

The Level 6 module, *Applied Practice 1 Personal and Professional Context* was highlighted as being highly beneficial for individuals who are currently out of the workforce. This module, combined with the core modules, focuses on enhancing students' employability and helping them set personal goals, boosting their confidence to pursue employment. For applied modules, students have the option to complete a desk-based research project and benefit from peer-based learning from classmates in employment.

The panel then reviewed in detail each individual module with the programme team. The review encompassed each module Definition Form, including learning outcomes, indicative content, teaching, learning and assessment and module resources. A series of module specific recommendations were noted and these are presented in Section 3.3 Recommendation 13, (a) to 13, (f). These include reviewing and revising learning outcomes, incorporating learning on specific topic areas in individual modules, revising module titles, and updating reading lists.

The Chair thanked the programme team, noting their strong defence of the programme, and wished them an enjoyable summer.

12.40 pm PRIVATE MEETING OF THE PANEL OF ASSESSORS

The Chairperson invited the panel members to outline the issues they felt had been highlighted during the meeting with TUS management and the programme team. The panel reviewed the proceedings of the day and discussed the various contributions of Management and the Programme team.

The panel agreed that the programme suite would be approved with no conditions. A series of recommendations would be developed based on discussions to further enhance the offering. The detailed wording of recommendations was then further discussed and developed and are presented in Section 3.3 of this Report. The validation panel further noted several commendations for the programme, these are outlined in Section 3.4 of this report.

The Chairperson thanked panel members for their work in reviewing the large volume of documentation and for their valuable insights throughout the day.

1.00 pm PANEL FEEDBACK TO FACULTY MANAGEMENT

In the concluding session, the Chairperson of the External Validation Panel, Mr. John Vickery briefed TUS management and the programme team on the outcome of the day. The panel were pleased to recommend approval of the proposed programmes, with a series of recommendations, outlined in Section 3.3 of the report.

The Chairperson then outlined the recommendations and noted that they were in the spirit of enhancing the programme. The panel commended the leadership of the Faculty and Department. They were impressed with the evident strategic focus of the programme, fulfilling regional needs and aligned with TUS strategy and the creation of an important flexible learning pathway for prospective students enabling upskilling employees of the sector. The Chairperson congratulated all involved and commended the positive interaction and unity of the programme team. The Chairperson thanked the panel members for their time and engagement in the review.

Dean of Faculty, Dr Michael Tobin thanked the Chairperson and panel members for a robust and excellent discussion and welcomed the findings which would enrich the

programme offerings. Dr. Tobin thanked the programme team and staff of the Department who had given generously of their time throughout the process.

The Chairperson, Mr John Vickery conveyed thanks to his fellow panel members, TUS Management, the Programme Team and the Quality Office before bringing the validation panel to a close.

13.15 pm CONCLUSION