Rannog na Foghlama ar Feadh an tSaoil
Department of Lifelong Learning

Report of External Validation Panel

for the

Higher Certificate in Business in Talent Management

Bachelor of Business in Talent Management & Organisational Change
(Level 7 Add-on)

Bachelor of Business (Hons) in Strategic Talent Management & Employee
Engagement (Level 8 Add-on)

Tuesday 18th June 2024

Contents

1.0   INTRODUCTION

This report outlines the proceedings of the external validation panel visit for the proposed *Higher Certificate in Business in Talent Management*, *Bachelor of Business in Talent Management & Organisational* Change (Level 7 Add-on) and *Bachelor of Business (Hons) in Strategic Talent Management & Employee Engagement (Level 8 Add-on)* in the Department of Lifelong Learning, and includes the findings of the External Validation Panel conducted on the 18th 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	18th June 2024

2.2   Programmes Evaluated

Award Title	Higher Certificate
Programme Title	Higher Certificate in Business in Talent 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 Talent Management and Organisational Change
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 Talent Management and Employee Engagement
NFQ Level	Level 8
ECTS Credits	60
Delivery Mode	Full-time, Online
Duration	1 year
Proposed Starting Date	September 2024
Contact	Mr. Seadna Ryan

Final Report

2.3   External Validation Panel of Expert Assessors

Name	Affiliation
Mr John Vickery	Former Registrar, Institute of Technology, Tallaght (Chairperson)
Ms Mary Fenton	Head of Department of Education, South East Technological University (SETU), Waterford
Mr Cathal Kearney	Retired Head of School of Business and Humanities, Dundalk Institute of Technology
Ms Anne Scally	Human Resource Management Consultant Pro-Active Management, Tullamore
Ms Marie Keary	Lecturer, Dorset College, Dublin

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
Mr. Seadna Ryan	Head of Department of Lifelong Learning
Programme Team: Declan Doran, Kevin Farrell, Shona Stewart, Jim Gilchrist, Alex Courtney, Gayle Tarmey, Rizwan Ahmed, Kenny O' Brien, Susan Colley, Suzanne Maher, Bríd Burns, Paul Aherne, 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 Talent Management (Level 6, 120 ECTS)
- Bachelor of Business in Talent Management and Organisational Change Level 7, Add On, 60 ECTS)
- Bachelor of Business (Honours) in Strategic Talent Management and Employee Engagement (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 three programme documents to further differentiate and make explicit the typical employment roles of Level 6, 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, entrepreneurship, digital literacy skills are identified as examples of where the learning could be made more explicit and weaved into the programme).

4) Make more explicit the learning related to employment law in the Higher Certificate programme.

5) Make explicit the learning content related to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in the Higher Certificate programme.

6) Further develop the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategies of the individual modules to include detail on 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.

7) Provide further detail in the documentation on the role of the Advisors that support student retention.

8) 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.

9) Specify in the Module Assessment strategies the 'Form' of the assessment, as Individual or Group.

10) Consider if the Final Exam is the most appropriate form of assessment for the individual modules as specified.

11) 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.

12) Proofread the programme documentation to ensure that typographical errors are corrected in the final documents (for example avoid USA spelling).

13) Consider seeking future recognition of the programme by relevant sectoral body such as Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD).

14) Address the following Module Specific Recommendations

   a) Review the use of active verbs and aligning with blooms taxonomy, for the following seven modules/LO's:
   - Stage 1, Leadership and Management Development (LO1)
   - Stage 1, Resourcing Talent (LO1)
   - Stage 1, Performance and Reward Management (LO2, LO3)
   - Stage 2, Managing HRM in a Global Context (LO1)
   - Stage 3, Business and HRM Information Systems (LO1)
   - Stage 3, Employment Law and Workplace Conflict Resolution (LO1)
   - Stage 3, Strategic Workforce Planning (LO1)
   - Stage 3, Diversity, Equality, Belonging and Inclusion (LO1)
   - Stage 4, Automation and the Future of Work (LO1)
   - Stage 4, Workplace Psychology and Interpersonal Skills (LO1)
   - Stage 4, Creating Engaging and Healthy Workplaces (LO1)

Final Report

b) Incorporate learning on 'Power and Politics, Social Capital and Workplace Development' to the Stage 2 module, *Contemporary Perspectives on Work and Organisations.*

c) Incorporate learning on 'Innovation and Creativity in Organisations' to the Stage 2 module *Organisational Design and Behaviour.*

d) Review the wording of LO5 of the Stage 2 module *Applied Practice 2 Organisational Alignment* to better reflect with what will be assessed. Review and update the recommended reading lists.

e) Review the learning outcomes of the Stage 2 module, *Managing HRM in a Global Context,* as they may be too advanced for a Level 6 programme. Add learning content on 'global perspectives, managing employee relations in different cultures and different labour laws'.

f) 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.

g) Add learning content on 'Enterprise Resource Planning Systems' to the Stage 3 module *Business and HRM Information Systems.*

h) Clarify what is being assessed in the practical evaluation of the Stage 3 module *Leading Change and Business Transformation*.

i) Add reference to GDPR to the Stage 3 module *Employment Law and Workplace Conflict Resolution.*

j) Consider how Case Studies could be incorporated to the assessment strategy of the Stage 3 module, *Diversity, Equality, Belonging and Inclusion.*

k) Add learning on 'strategic recruitment and retention, as well as the role of technology in workforce planning' to the Stage 3 module *Strategic Workforce Planning.*

l) Add further learning content on Psychology to the Stage 4 module, *Workplace Psychology and Interpersonal Skills* to better reflect the module title.

m) Update the reading resources of the Stage 4 module *Decision Making and Business Analytics* to the most up-to-date available.

n) Add a Strategic Management textbook to the reading list of the Stage 4 module *Applied Practice 4 - Crafting and Executing Strategy*.

o) Consider use of the word 'Wellbeing in the title of the Stage 4 module *Creating Engaging and Healthy Workplaces*. Include further content on emerging
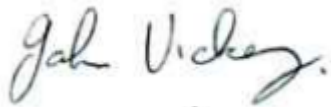
technologies and their impact on workplace engagement and the role of managers. Add the online version of the textbook by Amy C. Edmondson, The Fearless Organisation to the reading list.

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 responsiveness of the Faculty in recognising and addressing an appetite by lifelong learners for progression pathways and building this into the programme suite;

3) the progressive nature of the Faculty and emphasis on development of Teaching and Learning skills of staff.

4) the work of the student advisors in supporting online students and supporting their retention and addressing their needs in a timely fashion;

5) the common framework for setting up Moodle and virtual resources to support student engagement and learning online including the use of asynchronous resources;

6) the comprehensive programme documentation which is detailed and well developed including the use of up to date learning resources;

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 panel review.

The panel noted that including a sequential list of the Programme Learning Outcomes in the documentation would be beneficial

(signature)

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 18th 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 the Academic Council to validate new programmes for TUS. 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 proposed programmes and the documentation.

The panel noted that the documentation is comprehensive and well presented. A number of areas were identified that would merit further discussion and/or clarification with the programme team. These included the Admissions criteria including English language requirements, differentiation of employability for the respective awards, the amount of explicit core business content in the programme, teaching and learning strategies, assessment strategies including appropriateness of final examinations for given modules and professional accreditation. The Chairperson and panel agreed on general areas for discussion with Management and the Programme team.

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 joined the meeting. The panel members introduced themselves. The Chairperson thanked TUS for the opportunity to review the proposed programmes. Dr Michael Tobin expressed his gratitude to the panel for reviewing the material and participating in the validation panel process.

Dr. Michael Tobin shared a PowerPoint presentation that provided insight into the work of Faculty of Continuing, Professional Online & Distance Learning, detailing its structure, funding streams, industry connections, use of Community of Practice model and its future development plans. Dr. Tobin outlined that the Department of Lifelong Learning is seeking to validate a Higher Certificate programme in Talent Management with associated one-year add-on programmes to honours degree level. The presentation detailed student numbers, entry requirements, graduate attributes, progression pathways, programme aims, assessment methods, workplace readiness and the online student operating systems. Programmes are designed in consultation with industry to meet current and future skills needs. New modules created for the programmes were highlighted, with existing modules having recently undergone programmatic review. It was noted that Talent Management is a key strategic priority for companies, with high demand for employees possessing these skills.

The Chairperson thanked the management team for an impressive presentation and noted that the Faculty was progressive in its approach to online programme provision and its support of students and staff in this context. The Dean of Faculty noted that he is also serving as the Acting Dean of the Faculty of Business and Hospitality, leading to increased collaboration between both Faculties. It was confirmed by the Dean of Faculty that the full range of staffing expertise is available to deliver the programmes. The Faculty employs a range of Hourly Paid Assistant Lecturers (HPAL's) which delivery modules in the evening. These are employed in relevant sectors and bring a range of external and industry

Final Report

expertise to the Faculty. It was also noted that several full-time academics also work as HPALs in the evenings.

The panel members noted that the programme document does not clearly specify or differentiate the potential employment roles for Level 6, 7 and 8 graduates and that the programme document would benefit from further clarification of this. The panel note the importance of professional body recognition of the programme and cited the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD). The programme team noted that they had consulted with the CIPD and would consider seeking future recognition of the programme once it is more established. The panel observed that obtaining external recognition would greatly benefit graduates and enhance their appeal to employers.

The Chair wished the faculty every success and thanked the Management team for their time and input.

10.15am   MEETING WITH THE PROGRAMME TEAM

The Chairperson welcomed the programme team to the meeting and both members of the panel and programme team introduced themselves and detailed their areas of expertise. The Chairperson acknowledged the work in preparing the proposed programme document.

Entry Requirements

The programme team advised that the Faculty generally targets mature learners (23 years and over). The panel queried the admissions criteria for the programme and noted that the Leaving Certificate is an entry requirement, which would be publicly stated in programme documentation. It would be important that the programme is open to a broad range of entrants and be inclusive in that context.

The programme team confirmed that since the onset of Springboard, the Faculty has a growing number of students from a diverse range of cultures and that this adds value in

Final Report

the classroom. The panel recommended that the English language requirements be made more explicit in the document with clarification of requirements in the context of equivalency with the Common European Framework of References for Languages (CEFR). The panel also noted that further clarity should be provided in the entry requirements with respect to cognate/non-cognate entry requirements for the Level 7 and Level 8 add-on programmes.

Teaching, Learning & Assessment

The programme team noted that the teaching, learning and assessment strategies were appropriate to the online mode of programme provision. The Head of Department confirmed that the Faculty has access to, and utilises, the support of the Centre for Pedagogical Innovation and Development (CPID) for the professional development for its team. The programme team also emphasised that equity is central to their academic practice. They highlighted the kaleidoscope of assessments used to build confidence and noted the importance of a final exam to prepare students for working under time constraints. Each semester includes one three-hour exam. A comprehensive strategy has been developed to manage group projects effectively. This includes a Student Charter, set guidelines and a critical reflection component to encourage greater participation and ensure that the final grade is more equitable, reflecting individual contributions to the team. The Chair noted that where MCQs are used to assess individual modules, they should be referenced further in the documentation and assessment strategies, as they are particularly useful for gathering feedback. For students not in current employment, support is provided though peer-to-peer learning in class and group projects, with the applied practice module being particularly beneficial for development and learning. The panel noted the importance of specifying in the individual Module Assessment strategies the 'Form' of the assessment, as Individual or Group.

The panel noted that the team should further develop the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategies of the individual modules to include detail on 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

Final Report

pedagogies, Universal Design for Learning and diversity of assessment modes such as MCQ's, among others. The panel and programme teams discussed the use of Final Examinations as part of the assessment strategy. The panel asked the programme team consider if the Final Exam is the most appropriate form of assessment for the particular individual modules which have been selected to include a Final Exam across the programme, taking account the particular characteristics of the modules and associated learning.

Student Advisors

The student advisors in attendance at the meeting offered insight into their role, which includes supporting students returning to education, a weekly drop-in clinic, running workshops on how to use facilities, assignment planning, academic writing and referencing. They reach out to non-attending students to reengage them with learning and follow up with those who do not/are late in submitting assignments. The lecturing staff acknowledged that student advisors are crucial in supporting retention and collaborate closely with the lecturing team to ensure students reach their full potential. The panel commended this initiative.

Programme Aims and Learning Outcomes

The programme team noted the they had developed the Higher Certificate and associated Level 7 and Level 8 add-on programmes in collaboration with industry and built on the success of the existing 60 ECTS Certificate in HRM. This aligned with student feedback and their desire to have further progression pathways to advance their careers in this field. The programme team further confirmed that the programme learning outcomes had been appropriately mapped across the relevant levels of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

The panel queried the overall level of learning on core business topics given the use of the Business Award Standard and specifically referenced areas such as marketing, business entrepreneurship and digital skills. The programme team noted that these areas would be covered throughout the programme and accepted that this could be more

Final Report

explicitly stated in the documentation. The panel noted that this would be important to enhance alignment with the Business Award Standard and that the learning in these areas could be made more explicit and weaved into the programme. The panel also noted that the learning related to both 'Employment Law' 'Equality, Diversity and Inclusion' should be made more explicit in the Higher Certificate programme.

Curriculum

The Chair commended the programme team on the development of the curriculum, particularly noting that the learning outcomes align with Bloom's Taxonomy and the modules reading lists are current. The panel referenced the calculation and specification of independent learning hours in the individual modules and advised the programme team to review this, given that it is synthesised into the Approved Programme Schedules.

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 14, (a) to 14, (o). 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.

12.30 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 contributions of the Management and Programme team. The panel commended the leadership of the Faculty and Department. The panel again noted that the programme documentation was comprehensive and well structured. The panel agreed that the programme suite would be approved with no conditions but with a series of recommendations to further enhance the offering. The detailed wording of the recommendations was then discussed and developed and these are presented in Section 3.3 of this Report. The validation panel also noted several commendations for the programme and 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 on the outcome of the day. The panel noted a comprehensive programme presentation and were pleased to recommend approval of the proposed programmes, subject to a series of recommendations which are outlined in Section 3.3 of this report.

The Chairperson then provided an overview of the recommendations and noted that they were provided in the spirit of enhancing the programme. He congratulated all involved and commended the positive interaction and unity of the programme team. Dean of Faculty, Dr. Michael Tobin thanked the Chairperson and panel members for a robust and excellent discussion and welcomed the findings. He highlighted the detailed approach the panel had taken to analysing the modules which would add tremendous value to the delivery of the programme. Dr. Michael Tobin further thanked the Head of Department, Mr. Seadna

Ryan and the programme team for their work and dedication in bringing the programmes to this successful outcome.

The Chairperson thanked the panel members for their expertise, time and engagement in the review. The Chairperson also conveyed his thanks to TUS Management, the Programme Team and the Quality Office before bringing the validation panel to a close.

13.15pm   CONCLUSION OF MEETING