



TUS

**Technological University of the Shannon:
Midlands Midwest**
Ollscoil Teicneolaíochta na Sionainne:
Lár Tíre Iarthar Láir

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Faculty of Business and Hospitality
Department of Accounting and Business Computing

Report of External Validation Panel

External Validation Panel 16th May 2025

for the

Bachelor of Arts in Business, Social Enterprise and Community Development
(Level 7 Add-on)

And

Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Business, Social Enterprise and Community Development
(Level 8 Add-on)

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report outlines, in summary form, the proceedings of the external validation visit for the proposed *Bachelor of Arts in Business, Social Enterprise and Community Development* and *Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Business, Social Enterprise and Community Development* held on 16th May 2025. The external validation visit was undertaken in accordance with TUS Academic Regulations for the development of taught programmes. An external validation panel makes an independent impartial judgement on a programme proposal.

2.0 GENERAL INFORMATION

2.1 Higher Education Provider

Institute:	Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest
Faculty:	Business and Hospitality
Department:	Accounting and Business Computing
Date of Visit:	16 th May 2025

2.2 Programmes Evaluated

Programme Title	Bachelor of Arts in Business, Social Enterprise and Community Development
Award Title	Bachelor of Arts
NFQ Level	Level 7
ECTS Credits	60
Delivery Mode	Part time/online
Proposed Start Date	2025
Duration	1 Year

Programme Title	Bachelor of Arts in Business, Social Enterprise and Community Development
Award Title	Bachelor of Arts
NFQ Level	Level 7
ECTS Credits	60
Delivery Mode	Part time/online
Proposed Start Date	2025
Duration	1.5 Years

Programme Title	Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Business, Social Enterprise and Community Development
Award Title	Bachelor of Arts (Honours)
NFQ Level	Level 8
ECTS Credits	60
Delivery Mode	Part time/online
Proposed Start Date	2025
Duration	1 year

Programme Title	Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Business, Social Enterprise and Community Development
Award Title	Bachelor of Arts (Honours)
NFQ Level	Level 8
ECTS Credits	60
Delivery Mode	Part time/online
Proposed Start Date	2025
Duration	1.5 Years

2.3 External Validation Panel of Expert Assessors

<u>Name</u>	<u>Affiliation</u>
John Vickery (Chair)	Former Registrar, Institute of Technology, Tallaght
Mary Fenton	Head of Department of Education SETU Waterford
Dr. Cathal Kearney	Former Registrar, Dublin Business School
Louise O'Leary	CoAction West Cork
Fiona Delaney	Manager, AMACH! LGBT Galway
Keith Crishman	Student Rep, BA in Social Enterprise & Community Development (Level 7)
Secretary to Panel	Dr Brendan Murphy
Quality Officer	Amanda Ryan

2.4 TUS Staff

Dean of Faculty of Business &
Hospitality

Seadna Ryan

Head of Department of Accounting
and Business Computing

Dr Trevor Prendergast

Programme Team:

Alex Courtney,

Phelim Kilduff,

Eddie Higgins,

Nuala Keher,

Eilis Biggs,

Karen Costello,

Gillian Geraghty.

3.0 FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF EXTERNAL VALIDATION PANEL

3.1 Main Findings

The External Validation Panel of Assessors recommends approval of the following programmes:

- Bachelor of Arts in Business, Social Enterprise and Community Development Level 7 (Add-on) (60 ECTS);
- Bachelor of Arts in Social Enterprise and Community Development (SUSI Delivery)
- Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Business, Social Enterprise and Community Development L8 (Add-on) (60 ECTS).
- Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Social Enterprise and Community Development (60 ECTS) (SUSI Delivery)

3.2 Conditions

No conditions apply.

3.3 Recommendations

Programme Level

- 1) Reconsider the programme title and, in particular, the prominence given to Business in the context of the balance of Social Enterprise and Community Development content.
- 2) In line with recommendation 1 with respect to the programme title, review the specification of the programme learning outcomes (PLO's) to ensure they reflect the programme title, aim and content.
- 3) The panel strongly recommends that the Final Examination elements are removed. Consider the use of continuous assessment as the most appropriate assessment strategy to take account of the particular needs of the target learner cohort.
- 4) Specify the minimum English Requirements if English is not a first language (with reference to the Common European Reference Framework (CEFR) for English language entry requirements and its IELTS equivalent.
- 5) Incorporate further detail in the Teaching, Learning and Assessment strategy of the individual modules to better reflect the additional learning supports, including formative feedback, in-person workshops, and guest lecturers, as appropriate.
- 6) Include reference to the asynchronous classes in the Module Descriptors so that it is represented in the Approved Programme Schedule.

- 7) Incorporate further detail in the Assessment Strategies with respect to formative feedback. Some assessments or elements of assessments should take place earlier to allow for early formative feedback.
- 8) Further embed the development to digital literacy skills throughout the programme. Reflect this in module learning outcomes and indicative content as appropriate.
- 9) Review the specification of independent learning hours in line with directed learning and total learning for indicated ECTS volume.
- 10) Conduct a global review of recommended reading and references to ensure the most up-to-date references are used and identify relevant core texts, as appropriate. Consider the following as a text suitable to a range of modules: *The Enterprising Community: A Bottom-Up Perspective on the Capacity Within Communities to Regenerate* by Senan Cooke
- 11) Review the statement related to progression to organisations external to TUS in the progression section for the Level 8 programme to ensure that it is accurate.

Module-Specific Level 7 Programme

- 1) Address the following Module-Specific Recommendations

Applied Community Development

- Amend LO3 in line with Blooms Taxonomy using measurable active verb format.
- Add learning content on community profiling and skills within a community.
- Make more explicit learning content on Sustainability within the module.
- Elaborate on the asynchronous learning.

Entrepreneurship for Community Development

- Consider changing the title to Social Enterprise Development.
- Reconsider the volume of the indicative content in the module which is viewed as difficult to deliver. Remove the legal content covered in the syllabus as it is covered in a separate module.
- Amend LO4 in line with Blooms Taxonomy using measurable active verb format.
- Consider moving the individual presentation to the end of the assessment schedule.
- Expand on the Teaching and Learning Strategy.

Sociology, Social Change and Social Policy

- Add learning content on cultural Intelligence.
- Reconsider the timing of assessment with first assessment currently Week 9.
- Include Changing Demographics of Ireland in the indicative content.

Professional Development for Community Leaders

- Amend LO4 in line with Blooms Taxonomy using measurable active verb format.
- Make more explicit the learning content on Training and Supervision.

Community Education

- Review the indicative content and module reading list to include seminal thinkers and key theorists in the area. e.g. Paulo Freire.
- Make more explicit the learning content on roots of community education and addressing poverty and disadvantage and its role in addressing poverty disadvantage and exclusion.

Legal Frameworks for Community Organisation

- Consider Case Study analysis instead of the Final Examination.
- Consider how formative assessment could be provided early during the module.

Integrated Learning Project

- Review the module learning outcomes, particularly LO1.
- Some of the assessment should include reflection. Look at the balance of weighting of assessment giving appropriate weighting to the reflection component.

Module-Specific Level 8 Programme

1) Address the following Module-Specific Recommendations

Community Youth Work Approaches And Principles

- Review the indicative syllabus for the balance of legal content and analysis of youthwork and community work in theory and practice. Make the latter more explicit.

Social Enterprise Development and Finance

- Include learning content on strategies for scaling, sustainability and sustainable social enterprises.
- Add a recommended reading on the Finance element.
- Check LO1 to see if there is duplication with the Level 7 programme.
- Review the timing of assessment with the first assessment noted in Week 12.

Leading & Managing Organisation

- Review the assessment strategy to see if there is overassessment and consider their timing. Reduce the overall number of assessments.
- Review the title of the module to see if it reflects the learning outcomes and content of the module.
- Incorporate this module as part of the Saturday workshops.

Community Development Structures and Governance

- Make more explicit the learning content on Charity/Not-for profit Governance and address the balance of content relating to this and Corporate Governance.
- Consider adding ethics as a heading in the indicative syllabus.

Research Methods

- Make more explicit the learning in relation to Ethics and associated issues, including informed consent, in the learning outcomes and content.
- Reconsider including the annotated bibliography as part of the assessment of the module.
- Include broad outlines of the research methods covered.
- Consider how formative assessment could be provided early in the module.

Mentoring, Facilitating for Community & Business Leaders

- Consider the term Business leader in the module title in line with recommendation relating to programme title.
- Emphasise the role of community workers from a holistic perspective, encompassing their role as an agent for change, social justice and inclusion.

Community/Workplace Research Project

- Consider less theoretical and more applied assessments.
- Revise the required versus recommended reading lists.

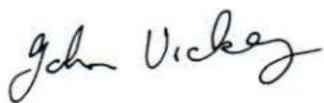
3.4 Commendations and Observations

The panel commend:

- 1) the proactiveness of the Faculty and Department in utilising the relationship with Equal Ireland to develop important programmes with the commendable mission to change communities;
- 2) the collaborative partnership between Equal Ireland and TUS in the programme team;
- 3) the programme team for developing an excellent, well-structured and accessible programme that supports access to higher education by communities experiencing marginalisation;
- 4) the development of a programme that will produce graduates in Social Enterprise and Community Development that will support and enable the local communities they work in;
- 5) the programme team for the comprehensive and high-quality documentation provided;
- 6) the Faculty and Department for their approach to supporting online learning students.

The panel appreciated the enthusiasm of the programme team, the constructive discussions held and the openness of the team to suggestions during the validation meeting.

The panel appreciated the inclusion of the learner voice as an integral part of the validation meeting.



Signature of Chairperson

Date: 17/05/2025