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

www.tus.ie

Faculty of Science and Health
Department of Bioveterinary and Microbial Sciences

Report of External Validation Panel

External Validation Panel 5th February 2025

for the

Higher Certificate in Veterinary Nursing

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report outlines, in summary form, the proceedings and findings of the external validation visit for the proposed Bioveterinary and Microbial Sciences programme held on 5th February 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
Faculty:	Science and Health
Department:	Bioveterinary and Microbial Sciences
Date of Visit:	5th February 2025

2.2 Programmes Evaluated

Programme	Higher Certificate in Veterinary Nursing
Award Title	Higher Certificate
NFQ Level	Level 6
ECTS Credits	120
Delivery Mode	Part Time/Online/Blended
Proposed Start Date	2025
Duration	2 years

2.3 External Validation Panel of Expert Assessors

Name	Affiliation
John Vickery (Chair)	Former Registrar, Institute of Technology, Tallaght
Shirley Gibbons	VN Qualifications Lead at Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS)
Dr Ian O'Connor	Head of Department of Natural Resources & the Environment, ATU Galway
Zoe Duggan	Chief Operating Officer, Village vets

Dr Mary Garvey   Dept Life Sciences, ATU Sligo
Secretary to Panel   Dr Brendan Murphy
Quality Officer   Amanda Ryan

2.4   Institute Staff
Dean of Faculty of Science and Health   Dr Don Faller
Head of Department of Bioveterinary and
Microbial Sciences   Dr Cormac O'Shea

Programme Team:

Gillian Coughlan, Olivia Cregg, Lisa Murray, Gina Burke, Aisling Flynn, Dr Maeve O'Reilly, Meadhbh O'Dowd, Roisin Brennan

3.0   FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF EXTERNAL VALIDATION PANEL

3.1   Main Findings

The External Validation Panel of Assessors recommends approval of the following programme.

- Higher Certificate in Science in Veterinary Nursing (120 ECTS) (Part-time)

3.2   Conditions

1) Revise the specification of the Entry Requirements to be more prescriptive and explicit with respect to NFQ Level, Required Work Experience, Interview, and English Language requirements. Collate these under the Entry Requirements section and resolve any discrepancies. In tandem, revise the Profile of Learners to be more generalised.

2) Review and reconsider how the 50 ECTS *Veterinary Clinic Work Experience* module is situated within the programme, currently as both an Entry Requirement and RPL assessed entity. As part of the review, reconsider the use of RPL and how the risk of students not having met the learning outcomes of the module can be safeguarded. Revise the module/programme structure accordingly.

3.3   Recommendations

General

1) Include the award stem, Higher Certificate [in Science] in Veterinary Nursing in the programme title.

2) Review and revise the Approved Programme Schedule (APS) to indicate:
   a) appropriate 'Total ECTS' and 'ECTS Credits Required' per stage;
   b) specification of directed/independent learning hours in line with total learning for indicated ECTS volume.

3) Include further detail in the programme document on the use of universal assessment design approaches and how this will be implemented in practice.

4) Review intended assessments to reflect a planned approach to patients in practice, supported by the actual practice experienced.

5) Provide students with specifications for the most suitable hardware/software required to support programme accessibility and learning. Include the specifications in the final programme document.

6) Continue to develop/utilise asynchronous learning resources to support student learning. The panel views this important in the context of the target student cohort in full-time employment.

7) Standardise the terminology used to describe the Mentor/Placement Supervisor through the programme document.

8) Conduct a stakeholder review at the end of Year 1 as part of annual monitoring, to ensure the programme is meeting the needs of industry.

Modules General

9) Check the reference to OSCE's throughout the module descriptors to ensure that this assessment term is appropriately used.

10) Review the module learning outcomes across the modules and revise any that are written as assessments.

11) Update the reading lists to ensure the most up-to-date book references and appropriate journal references are included across all modules, where applicable.

Modules Specific

12) Ensure that the communication element links through the learning outcomes, indicative content and assessment in the Stage 1 module, *Principles of Veterinary Nursing and Client Care*.

13) Consider limiting the indicative content of the Stage 1 module *Veterinary Anatomy and Physiology* to companion animal physiology.

14) Reconsider the use of the word 'suffering' in the module descriptor of the Stage 1 module *Veterinary Medical Nursing 1*.

15) Review the learning outcomes of the Stage 2 module *Veterinary Pharmacology* to eliminate duplication with other modules. Consider adding a learning outcome related to pharmacokinetics and pharmacodynamics.

16) Include reference to 'both routine and emergency surgical procedures' in the Stage 2 module *Veterinary Surgical Nursing*.

17) Revise the wording of the module descriptor in the Stage 2 module *Veterinary Anaesthetic Nursing & Analgesia* to refer to student developing competence rather
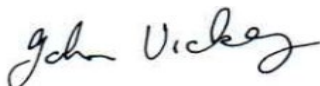
than providing competency to students. Review the assessment to include reference to a verbal assessment element.

18) Review the Stage 2 module *Clinical Competency Exam* to broaden the learning outcomes and overall aim of the module. Consider including learning outcome(s) and assessment(s) relating to reflective practice/reflective essays covering themes such as communication, student wellbeing and timekeeping, *inter alia.*

3.4   Commendations and Observations

The panel commend:

1) the evident strategic focus of the programme, fulfilling a skills gap and aligned with TUS strategy;

2) the creation of an important flexible learning pathway for prospective students enabling upskilling employees and representing an innovation for the sector, positive impact on the community, and enabling improved patient care;

3) the comprehensive programme documentation provided that presented a clear methodical approach, effectively outlining key objectives and expected outcomes in a professional manner;

4) the consistent use of blooms taxonomy for the writing of learning outcomes;

5) the diversity of assessments including the use of cross modular assessment;

6) the ethical link and the promotion of animal welfare in the Stage 1, *Companion Animal Husbandry and Welfare* module;

7) the use of recorded lectures and asynchronous learning resources to support learning;

8) the links with professional accreditation bodies and commitment to appropriate accreditation for the graduates;

9) the support of employers, placement supervisors and mentors and the associated provision of resources and CPD;

10) the positive engagement, enthusiasm, dedication, and team spirit exhibited by the programme team during the validation visit.

Signature of Chairperson

Date: 5/05/2025