



**TUS**

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

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**Limerick School of Art and Design  
Department of Midlands Media and Design**

**Report of External Validation Panel**

**External Validation Panel 29<sup>th</sup> September 2025**

**for the**

**Master of Arts in Sustainable Innovation Design  
Postgraduate Diploma in Arts in Sustainable Innovation Design  
Post Graduate Certificate in Sustainable Innovation Design  
Certificate in Design for Sustainability & Circular Economies**

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report outlines, in summary form, the proceedings of the external validation visit for the proposed Master of Arts in Sustainable Innovation Design held on 29<sup>th</sup> September 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:	Limerick School of Art and Design
Department:	Department of Midlands Media and Design
Date of Visit:	29 <sup>th</sup> September 2025

### 2.2 Programmes Evaluated

<b>Programme Title</b>	<b>Master of Arts in Sustainable Innovation Design</b>
Award Title	Master of Arts
NFQ Level	Level 9
ECTS Credits	90
Delivery Mode	Full time
Proposed Start Date	2026
Duration	1 year

<b>Programme Title</b>	<b>Postgraduate Diploma in Sustainable Innovation Design</b>
Award Title	Postgraduate Diploma
NFQ Level	Level 9
ECTS Credits	60
Delivery Mode	Full time
Proposed Start Date	2026
Duration	1 year

<b>Programme Title</b>	<b>Postgraduate Certificate in Sustainable Innovation Design</b>
Award Title	Postgraduate Certificate
NFQ Level	Level 9
ECTS Credits	30
Delivery Mode	Full time
Proposed Start Date	2026
Duration	1 year

<b>Programme Title</b>	<b>Certificate in Design for Sustainability &amp; Circular Economies</b>
Award Title	Certificate
NFQ Level	Level 9
ECTS Credits	10
Delivery Mode	Full time
Proposed Start Date	2026
Duration	1 year

### 2.3 External Validation Panel of Expert Assessors

<u>Name</u>	<u>Affiliation</u>
John Vickery (Chair)	Former Registrar, Institute of Technology, Tallaght
Darren Doyle	Director - Studio 93
Lisa Dooley	Creative Director at the FACTORY
Lara Hanlon	Lecturer, Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art and Design
David O'Callaghan	Course Director - Visual Communications & Design SETU
Secretary to Panel	Dr Sarah O'Toole, TUS
Quality Officer	Amanda Ryan

## 2.4 TUS Staff

Vice President, Academic Affairs  
and Registrar

Dr Maria Kyne

Dean of Limerick School of Art  
and Design

Mr Mike Fitzpatrick

Head of Department of Midlands  
Media & Design

Mr Mike O'Dowd

Head of Department, Limerick  
School of Art & Design

Dr Adam de Eyto

### Programme Team:

Tara Cullen, Eoin Heffernan, John Benton, Carmel Joyce, Deaglan Campbell,  
Paul O'Neill

### **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:

- Master of Arts in Sustainable Innovation Design
- Postgraduate Diploma in Arts in Sustainable Innovation Design
- Post Graduate Certificate in Sustainable Innovation Design
- Certificate in Design for Sustainability & Circular Economies

#### **3.2 Conditions**

none

#### **3.3 Recommendations**

- 1) Review and update the programmes learning outcomes for the embedded awards as they are currently the same for each award.
- 2) Revise the length of the programme learning outcomes and reduce down to 1 or 2 lines where possible.
- 3) Include the minimum entry requirements for those entering the programme whose first language is not English or Irish. Reference the minimum English language requirements which is B2+ or greater in the Common European Framework for Languages (equivalent IELTS 6.0)
- 4) Consider how best to ensure that the necessary level of prior knowledge and skills required to complete the programmes is communicated to potential applicants coming from multiple disciplines (consider the use of a portfolio or an interview as suitable options).
- 5) Review the wording of the repeat assessments to ensure the repeat assessment is not perceived as an easier option for completion.
- 6) Consider how best to incorporate team dynamics within the programme to ensure students will have the necessary skills to work and collaborate with peers.
- 7) Review and update the references across all modules to ensure the most recent and relevant version is referenced.
- 8) Provide students with guidelines to inform them of AI and ethical issues, so they are aware and informed at the start of the programme.
- 9) Consider how to provide additional support for students without a graphic design background.

### **Module Specific Recommendations**

#### **Design For Sustainability And Circular Economies**

- Review LO3 and the use of '*Understand*', consider changing this to '*Discuss*'

#### **Design Ethnography Research**

- None

## **Design for Change**

- Consider the use of sample projects or guest speakers to highlight the impact of different projects.
- Consider incorporating more than just '*human centred practice*' to further enhance the module.

## **Collaborative Sustainable Design Project**

- Ensure the latest project management methodologies are referenced in the syllabus.
- Considering including the book '*A guide to the project management Body of Knowledge PMBOK 7<sup>th</sup> Edition and the standard for project management*', in the required reading list.

## **Strategic Design & Innovation Heuristics**

- Review LO5, and the use of '*Understand*'

## **Major Final Project: Visualising Sustainable Futures**

- Consider the use of a predetermined list of topics or a scoping session to support students who are not sure of which area to choose for their design project.
- Consider offering live projects from both internal or external sources to students where relevant and possible.

### **3.4 Commendations and Observations**

1) The panel commends the coherent, systems-thinking structure, the collaborative approach (Theory, Research, Design Practice) and the integration of Circular Economy, Life Cycle Thinking and Conscious Design throughout the curriculum and assessment.

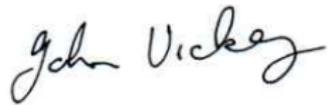
2) The panel commends the depth of industry engagement (IDI/Design Skillnet, The Factory, FORGE/DFGN), providing authentic projects and international perspectives that strengthen graduate readiness.

3) The panel commends the cross-modular assessment and Process Journal for evidencing iterative, research-driven practice and reflective learning aligned to Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and national policy priorities.

4) The panel commends the team on the student focused approach incorporated throughout the programmes.

5) The panel commends the team on the focus of their design principles and ethics that was evidence in response to questions raised by the panel.

6) The panel commends the team on the quality of the submission the presentation and the interaction of staff with the panel.



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Signature of Chairperson

Date:16/10/2025