



TUS

**Technological University of the Shannon:
Midlands Midwest**

Ollscoil Teicneolaíochta na Sionainne:
Lár Tíre Iarthar Láir

www.tus.ie

**Report of Peer Review Panel
Programmatic Review
of the
Faculty of Science and Health
Department of Social Sciences
External Validation Meetings held on
Thursday 9th of May 2024
Conducted remotely via Microsoft Teams**

Contents

1.0	INTRODUCTION	3
2.0	GENERAL INFORMATION	3
2.1	Higher Education Provider	3
2.2	Programmes Evaluated	4
2.3	External Panel Members	7
2.4	University Staff & Others	8
3.0	FINDINGS, CONDITIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	9
3.1	Main Findings	9
3.2	Condition	9
3.3.	Recommendations	9
3.4	Commendations and Observations	11

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report outlines, in summary form, the proceedings of the Programmatic Review of the Department of Social Sciences, External Review Panel constituted to externally review the programmes:

Group 1 Social Care Programmes

Bachelor of Arts in Applied Social Studies in Social Care
Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Applied Social Studies in Social Care
Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Social Care Practice
Bachelor of Arts in Applied Social Care (PT 5 Years)

Group 2 Early Childhood Programmes

Bachelor of Arts in Early Childhood Education and Care
Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Early Childhood Education and Care
Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Early Childhood Education and Care
Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Early Years' Care and Education

Group 3 Psychology Programme

Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Applied Psychology

External Review Panel is a study process whereby External Persons from various capacities including academia, industry, students, alumni, etc., conduct a critical evaluation of the Departments offerings.

2.0 GENERAL INFORMATION

2.1 Higher Education Provider

University: TUS Midlands Midwest - Athlone Campus
Faculty: Faculty of Science and Health
Department: Social Sciences
Date of Visit: Thursday 9th of May 2024 – Virtual External Panel via MS Teams

2.2 Programmes Evaluated

Group 1 Social Care Programmes

Award Title	Bachelor of Arts in Applied Social Studies in Social Care
Exit Award	N/A
NFQ Level	7
ECTS Credits	180
Award Class	Ordinary Bachelor Degree Ab initio
Award Type	Bachelor of Arts
Duration	3 years

Award Title	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Applied Social Studies in Social Care
Exit Award	N/A
NFQ Level	8
ECTS Credits	60
Award Class	Honours Degree Addon
Award Type	Bachelor of Arts (Honours)
Duration	1 year

Award Title	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Social Care Practice
Exit Award	N/A
NFQ Level	8
ECTS Credits	240
Award Class	Honours Degree Ab initio
Award Type	Bachelor of Arts (Honours)
Duration	4 years

Award Title	Bachelor of Arts in Applied Social Care
Exit Award	N/A
NFQ Level	7
ECTS Credits	180
Award Class	Ordinary Bachelor Degree Ab initio
Award Type	Bachelor of Arts
Duration	5 years (PT)

Group 2 Early Childhood Programmes

Award Title	Bachelor of Arts in Early Childhood Education and Care
Exit Award	N/A
NFQ Level	7
ECTS Credits	180
Award Class	Ordinary Bachelor Degree Ab initio
Award Type	Bachelor of Arts
Duration	3 years

Award Title	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Early Childhood Education and Care
Exit Award	N/A
NFQ Level	8
ECTS Credits	240
Award Class	Honours Degree Ab initio
Award Type	Bachelor of Arts (Honours)
Duration	4 years

Award Title	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Early Childhood Education and Care
Exit Award	N/A
NFQ Level	8
ECTS Credits	60
Award Class	Honours Degree Addon
Award Type	Bachelor of Arts (Honours)
Duration	1 year

Award Title	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Early Years' Care and Education
Exit Award	N/A
NFQ Level	8
ECTS Credits	60
Award Class	Honours Degree Addon
Award Type	Bachelor of Arts (Honours)
Duration	1 year

Group 3 Psychology Programme

Award Title	Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Applied Psychology
Exit Award	N/A
NFQ Level	8
ECTS Credits	240
Award Class	Honours Degree Ab initio
Award Type	Bachelor of Science (Honours)
Duration	4 years

2.3 External Panel Members

Damien Courtney (Chairperson to Panel)
Former Head of the Faculty of Business
And Humanities
Cork Institute of Technology
damienacourtney@outlook.com

Shelia Buckley-Byrne
Chief Executive Officer
St Hilda's Service
Athlone
sbuckleybyrne@sthildas.ie

Ronnie Harrison
Head of Quality & Academic Affairs
Open Training College
Dublin
rharrison@opentrainingcollege.com

Dr John McHugh
Programme Director for Applied Social Studies
(Professional Social Care)
Carlow College
Carlow
jmchugh@carlowcollege.ie

Dr Mary Moloney
Dept. Reflective Pedagogy and Early Childhood Studies
Mary Immaculate College
Limerick
mary.moloney@mic.ul.ie

Dr Pat Donohue (Secretary to Panel)
Former Assistant Registrar
TUS Midwest
drpatdonohue@gmail.com

2.4 University Staff & Others

Dr Don Faller - Dean of Faculty of Science and Health

Dr Noelín Fox – Head of Department of Social Sciences

The Programme Leaders and Lecturing staff include but are not limited to:

Ashling Jackson	Bernadette Naughton	Caroline Coyle
Chris McDermott	Denise Macgiollari	Edel Lynn
Eimear Kelly	Finola Colgan-Carey	Grainne Powell
Fiona Walsh	Hilary Thornton	Imelda Cooke
Imelda Rea	Karen Leonard	Keira Kilroy
Lorna Mitchell	Mairead Seery	Margaret O’Keefe
Marguerite Shanley	Mary Corrigan	Mary McHugh
Michelle Kenny	Orla Dowling	Paul Hogan
Paul Timoney	Pearl Moore	Stephanie Dolan
Teresa Brown	Valerie Besler	Vincent O’Connor
Delores Crerar	Anna Rose Codd	John Harding
Brigid Delamere	Doireann O’Callaghan	Fiona Budds
Helen Awhinawhi	Nicola Ryan	Deirdre Walsh
Eoghan McNeill	Jason Palframan	Sheila McGree

3.0 FINDINGS, CONDITIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 Main Findings

The External Validation Panel of Assessors recommends approval of the programmes and associated awards as outlined in Section 2.2 of this report subject to the condition and recommendations as specified in Sections 3.2 and 3.3.

3.2 Condition

State clearly the status of the policy relating to Fitness to Practice as it applies to the programmes to ensure compliance with regulatory or governance requirements. Ensure the placement handbooks and documentation reflect the current position.

3.3. Recommendations

Group 1 Programmes: Social Care

- Review the operation of the work placement processes giving consideration to clearly defined roles and responsibilities to ensure compliance with the relevant and regulatory bodies.
- Review Management module titles to reflect content (e.g. organisational structures) Align learning outcomes.
- Prioritise the inclusion of progression routes (e.g. Masters. PHD) for programme graduates.
- Clarify the status of the PATH 4 phase 2 funding in the documentation. Amend documentation accordingly.
- Clearly identify and review the wording of the learning outcomes for placement preparation modules across the programmes. (Use competency-based action verbs). Employers should be made aware of the learning outcomes for the placement.

Group 2 Programmes: Early Childhood

- Consider and identify the resourcing requirement for the combined Semester 9 Research and Placement components.
- Consider alignment of the research component of the marketing module (year 4) and the Research Methods module (year 4) – Potential for students to undertake research in marketing.
- Clearly define selection criteria for location placement taking account of the relevant bodies. (Tusla & QAB).
- Ensure that pedagogical leadership is explicit in modules where it applies. (Pay attention to professional preparation modules, professional practice placement and associated assessment).

- Implement training programme for placement-based mentors.
- Swap the 4-week reflective period with the 8-week reflective period in the Personal Reflection for Practice module. Consider using this module in Social Care.
- Prioritise the progression routes (Masters/PHD) for programme graduates.
- Consider linking inclusion theme in Practice Placement.
- Clearly identify and review the wording of the learning outcomes for work placement and placement preparation across the programmes. (Use competency-based action verbs). Employers should be made aware of the learning outcomes for the placement.
- Consider relocating reading lists included into a central repository.

Group 3 Programme: Applied Psychology

- Consider modular CPD postgraduate progression as an offering.
- Consider including Behaviour Support specialism. This could be considered across the programmes.
- Consider including alternative strategies to ABA.
- Consider broadening the selection criteria for the Erasmus study abroad option to include students' QCA.
- Consider changing the title of the Academic skills module to Academic Skills and Self Development in order to more accurately reflect the learning outcomes.

Student Group

Issues highlighted:

- Very positive feedback.
- Include an induction session for Moodle.
- Consider extending the thesis time given. The poster presentation could be used as a research proposal.
- Consider the level of duplication relating to Behaviourism content.

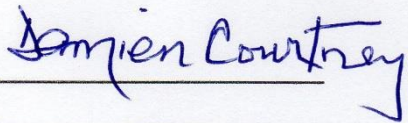
Employer/Alumni Group

Issues highlighted:

- Lack of practical skills for work placement.
- More guidance and structure for work placement.
- Length of placement blocks (longer better).
- Better understanding of HSE operation.
- Include skills like first aid before placement.

3.4 Commendations and Observations

- The panel commends the quality of the programme submissions and documentation and noted their comprehensive and detailed nature.
- The panel appreciates the documentation layout and ease of navigation.
- The panel commends the positive and collegiate engagement of the programme team during the panel sessions.
- The panel recognise the very positive feedback from students and alumni in terms of their learning, student experience and level of support.
- The panel commends the team on their external body accreditation.



Handwritten signature of Damien Courtney in blue ink, written over a horizontal line.

Signature of Chairperson

Date: 27th May 2024