



TUS

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

Ollscoil Teicneolaíochta na Sionainne:
Lár Tíre Iarthar Láir

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**Dámh an Ghnó agus Daonnachtaí
Faculty of Business and Humanities**

**An Roinn Spórt agus Luath-Óige
Department of Sport and Early Childhood**

Report of External Validation Panel

External Validation Panel, 14/03/2024

for the

Master of Arts in Early Intervention and Inclusive Practice for Children
Postgraduate Diploma in Early Intervention and Inclusive Practice for Children
Postgraduate Certificate in Early Intervention and Inclusive Practice for Children

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report outlines, in summary form, the proceedings and findings of the external validation visit for the proposed:

Master of Arts in Early Intervention and Inclusive Practice for Children;

Postgraduate Diploma in Early Intervention and Inclusive Practice for Children;

Postgraduate Certificate in Early Intervention and Inclusive Practice for Children;

held on 14th March 2024. 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

Provider	TUS: Midlands Midwest
Faculty	Business and Humanities
Department	Sport and Early Childhood
Date of Visit	14 th March 2024

2.2 Programme Evaluated

Programme Title	Master of Arts in Early Intervention and Inclusive Practice for Children
Award Title	Master of Arts
NFQ Level	9
ECTS Credits	90
Award Class	Level 9
Delivery Mode	Taught
Duration	1.5 years full-time or two year part-time
Proposed Starting Date	September 2024
Contact	Dr. Craig Coffey/Ashling Sheehan Boyle

Programme Title	Postgraduate Diploma in Early Intervention and Inclusive Practice for Children
Award Title	Master of Arts
NFQ Level	9
ECTS Credits	60
Award Class	Master of Arts
Delivery Mode	Taught
Duration	one year full-time
Proposed Starting Date	September 2024
Contact	Dr. Craig Coffey/Ashling Sheehan Boyle

Programme Title	Postgraduate Certificate in Early Intervention and Inclusive Practice for Children
Award Title	Postgraduate Certificate
NFQ Level	9
ECTS Credits	30
Award Class	Postgraduate Certificate
Delivery Mode	Taught
Duration	0.5 years
Proposed Starting Date	September 2024
Contact	Dr. Craig Coffey/Ashling Sheehan Boyle

2.3 External Validation Panel of Expert Assessors

Name	Affiliation
Mr. Damien Courtney - Chairperson	Fellow Emeritus CIT
Ms. Sarah McElligott	Thumbelina's Creche

Ms. Siobhan Canavan	Centre for Education and Lifelong Learning
Dr. Annie Cummins	MTU
Ms. Helen Ryan	ABC Start Right (Paul Partnership)
Ms. Isobel van deVenter	Student Representative

Secretary to Panel: Dr. Micheal Francis Ryan, TUS.
Support to Secretary/Panel: Ms. Claire Frawley, TUS

2.4 TU Staff

Name	Affiliation
Dr. Terry Twomey	VP Academic Affairs and Registrar
Mr. Donnacha McNamara	Dean of Faculty of Business and Humanities
Dr. Amy McGuire/Joe Mulcahy	Head of Department of Sport and Early Childhood
Dr. James Griffin	Head of Department of Marketing and Digital Communications
Programme Coordinators: Dr. Craig Coffey/Ashling Sheehan Boyle Programme Team: Niamh Cusack, Karen Dunne, Nuala Finucane, Marion Geary, Keith Hennessey, Amy McGuire	

3.0 FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF EXTERNAL VALIDATION PANEL

3.1 Main Findings

The External Validation Panel of Assessors recommends approval of the proposed programmes and associated embedded awards:

Master of Arts in Early Intervention and Inclusive Practice for Children

Embedded Awards:

- Postgraduate Diploma in Early Intervention and Inclusive Practice for Children
- Postgraduate Certificate in Early Intervention and Inclusive Practice for Children

3.2 Conditions

- 1) The Programme should include a module on 'Self-Care' to embrace: Reflective Practice and Personal and Professional Development processes.

3.3 Recommendations

Delivery Mode; Access & Entry Processes; Resources & Programme Marketing

- 1) Give further consideration to the intended delivery modes for the programme (full-time, part-time, face to face and blended); how these options would work in practice; which mode would best accommodate market demand, while also being sustainable in terms of staffing and resource demands;
- 2) Clarify the potential entry process for non-standard applicants (e.g. accommodating access to the programme by parents/family-members experiencing trauma);
- 3) Include in the documentation clear pathways for how potential parents/carers could access relevant components of the programme (RPL process, access to embedded awards or participation in relevant modular components);
- 4) Develop a marketing strategy for the programme, that widens the potential appeal, to include potential interest groups including: primary school educators (including Resource Teachers and Special Needs Assistants);
- 5) Ensure that there is access to relevant materials and resources for the practical elements of the programme (creative arts, licences for software and relevant accredited programmes);

Programme Content, Structure, Learning Outcomes & Assessment

- 6) Reconsider the syllabus design to include more practice-based modules, possibly increasing the allocation of hours towards the practical components;
- 7) Consider the integration of a placement component to provide additional opportunities for practice-based skill development;
- 8) Review the proposed provision of modular credits on Research Methods; is it excessive - given that prospective students will have typically completed a research methods component at undergraduate level?
- 9) Consider integrating key elements of the *Research Methods 1* module into the *Applied Research Methods* Module and create a 5-credit space for a *Self-Care Personal/Professional Development* type Module;
- 10) Provide (where appropriate) additional access to resources and/or inputs/workshops on foundation research methods for participants, who may not have prior knowledge of research;
- 11) Consider (given the practice-based focus of the programme) including the option of a 'work-based practice-research component' as an alternative to a more traditional 30 credit dissertation option. This option might include action-research (focused on practice interventions and improvement);
- 12) Clarify the arrangements in place for liaison with relevant sectors/environments and practice-based partnerships;
- 13) Consider the breadth and depth of content in the proposed programme and see if there are opportunities for rationalisation and/or use of 'flipped classroom' technologies to address content coverage;
- 14) Be more explicit (in programme learning outcomes) regarding the development of capacity for leadership and advocacy skills;
- 15) Review Programme Learning Outcomes that only refer to the ECEC context - so that the programme is inclusive of a wider range of contexts; e.g 0-12 age groups (see module *Early Intervention for Physical Education*);
- 16) Clarify the 'specialist knowledge' that participants will have on completion of the '*Adversity, Trauma & Resilience*' module;
- 17) In the Programme Learning Outcomes, include a more explicit focus on how children themselves, become active agents and advocates for the promotion and achievement of relevant sustainable development goals;
- 18) Review the total number of assessments and see if there are further opportunities for the use of cross-modular and dual assessments;
- 19) Review current assessment requirements (ensure consistency regarding weightings and word-counts);

- 20) Provide an accurate 'assessment schedule' that clearly outlines for participants the nature and scope of assessments across each semester;
- 21) Review the use of the word 'industry' and replace it with sector/environment in the documentation;

CPD provision for Staff & Students

- 22)
- I. Ensure that relevant staff (those delivering 'Adversity, Trauma and Resilience' module) have access to training/CPD in 'trauma-based' education responses;
 - II. Ensure additional training (e.g. TUSLA online safeguarding programme) is encouraged and made available to participants;

23) Module Specific Recommendations

- I. Historical & Contemporary Perspectives of Inclusion**
Assessment-specify word count requirements;
- II. Early Intervention through Physical Education**
Clarify in more detail - how capacity for dealing with adversity/trauma will be addressed i.e. specific strategies (access possible training –e.g. 'Just Right States' model);
- III. Therapeutic & Creative Play Skills**
Develop the 'relationship building' component of the module (possibly including the work of Joanna Fortune);
- IV. Adversity Trauma & Resilience**
Review expansive module content and see if some themes can be incorporated elsewhere. Consider opportunities to address 'self-care and wellbeing supports' for participants who may be triggered by issues explored in the module;
- V. Strategies for Early Intervention and Practices**
Assessment - clarify requirements for Skills Based Toolkit - specific skills;
- VI. Positive Behaviour Strategies & Child Development**
Review expansive module content and see if some of the themes can be incorporated into other modules. Review appropriateness of some recommended reading material for a level 9 programme;
- VII. Research Methods 1**

See recommendation 8/9 above regarding integration of this module with Applied Research Methods;

VIII. Applied Research Methods

As above

IX. Research Thesis

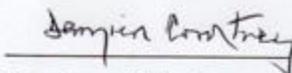
- Clarify how the 1-hour lecture provision will be utilised throughout this module
- Review the word count being allocated to the literature review
- Clarify procedures for ethical approval for research in settings involving children (TUS Research Policy)

General Recommendations

- I. Booklists -Review all reading lists to ensure completeness and consistency of presentation;
- II. If possible - offer choice in assessment modes in accordance with UDL principles;

3.4 Commendations and Observations

- 1) The panel commend the team for the well-structured, comprehensive documentation and very interesting indicative syllabus;
- 2) The panel commend the team for the extensive work and research evident in the background preparation of the impressive documentation;
- 3) The panel appreciated the detailed discussions and clarifications provided by the programme team;
- 4) The panel commend many aspects of the proposed programme; in particular the skills-based components, the liaison with practice settings, creative approaches and the potential relevance of the programme to the childhood/education/care settings;
- 5) The panel would like to commend the team for their active and enthusiastic engagement with the panel;



Signature of Chairperson

Date: 27/07/2024