



TUS

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

Ollscoil Teicneolaíochta na Sionainne:
Lár Tíre Iarthar Láir

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**Dámh an n-Nolaíochtaí Feidhmeacha agus na Teicneolaíochta
Faculty of Applied Sciences and Technology**

Department of Applied Science

Report of External Validation Panel

External Validation Visit, 22nd March 2022

for the

**Bachelor of Science (Honours) in
Agricultural Science and Sustainability**

and Embedded Awards:

**Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Science and Sustainability
Higher Certificate in Science in Agricultural Science and Sustainability**

and

Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Agricultural Science and Sustainability (Add-On)

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report outlines in summary form, the proceedings of the External Validation Panel, Department of Applied Science external validation visit for the proposed B.Sc. (Honours) in Agricultural Science and Sustainability and Embedded Awards Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Science and Sustainability, Higher Certificate in Science in Agricultural Science and Sustainability and Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Agricultural Science and Sustainability (Add-On) and the findings and conclusions of the External Validation Panel conducted on 22nd March 2022. The external validation visit was undertaken in accordance with Section 3 of the LIT document '*Academic Council Regulations and Procedures for Taught Programmes (ACRP): Academic Year 2021/2022*'. (The ACRP document is available on the LIT website.) An external validation panel makes an independent impartial judgement on a programme.

2.0 GENERAL INFORMATION

2.1 Higher Education Provider

Institute: TUS: Midlands Midwest
Faculties: Faculty of Applied Sciences and Technology
Departments: Department of Applied Science
Date of Visit: 22nd March 2022

2.1. Programmes Evaluated

2.1.1 Programme Title:	B.Sc. (Honours) in Agricultural Science and Sustainability
Award Title:	B.Sc. (Honours) in Agricultural Science and Sustainability
NFQ Level:	Level 8
ECTS Credits:	240
Format:	Bachelor of Science
Delivery Mode:	Full Time/ACCS/Part-time
Duration:	Four Years
Proposed starting date:	September 2022
Contact:	Dr. Daniel Walsh
Award Title:	B.Sc. in Agricultural Science and Sustainability
NFQ Level:	Level 7
ECTS Credits:	180
Format:	Bachelor of Science
Delivery Mode:	Full Time/ACCS/Part-time
Duration:	Three Years
Contact:	Dr. Daniel Walsh

2.1.3 Programme Title: Certificate in Agricultural Science and Sustainability
Award Title: Certificate
NFQ Level: Level 6
ECTS Credits: 120
Format: Certificate
Delivery Mode: Full Time/ACCS/Part-time
Duration: Two Years
Contact: Dr. Daniel Walsh

2.1.4 Programme Title: Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Agricultural Science and Sustainability (Add-On)
Award Title: Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Agricultural Science and Sustainability
NFQ Level: Level 8
ECTS Credits: 60
Format: Bachelor of Science (Honours)
Delivery Mode: Full Time/ACCS/Part-time
Duration: One Year

2.2. External Validation Panel of Expert Assessors

Name:	Affiliation:
Dr. Michele Glacken	IT Sligo (Chairperson)
Prof. Liam Sinclair	Harper Adams University
Dr. Kim McFadden	Letterkenny Institute of Technology
Dr. Roberta McDonald	Devenish Nutrition
Mr John McHugh	Farming for Nature Farmer
Ms Frances Hurley	Student Representative

2.3. Institute Staff

President	Prof. Vincent Cunnane
Academic Affairs & Registrar	Dr. Terry Twomey
Dean of Faculty of Applied Science & Technology	Dr. Maura Clancy
Head of Department of Applied Science	Dr. Daniel Walsh
Principal of Gurteen Farm	Mr Jon Parry

Programme Development Team

Josephine Treacy, Bridget Kirwan, Brigid Doyle, Clifford Guest, Elisha McGrane, Kevin Healion, Martin McCormack, Michael Maunsell, Pauline Ryan, Paula Briody, Niamh Fahy, Laura Curtin, AnneMarie Doheny, Shannon Woods, Grainne McGrath, Jon Parry.

3.0 FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF EXTERNAL VALIDATION PANEL

3.1 Main Findings

The External Validation Panel of Assessors recommends approval of the proposed B.Sc. (Honours) in Agricultural Science and Sustainability and Embedded Awards, Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Science and Sustainability, Higher Certificate in Science in Agricultural Science and Sustainability and Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Agricultural Science and Sustainability (Add-On) subject to the recommendations as specified in Sections 3.3.

3.2 Conditions

No conditions apply.

3.3 Recommendations

- 3.3.1 Introduce students to a range of philosophies early in the programme so they are in a position to view future content through a variety of lens.
- 3.3.2 Review the programmes content to ensure that agriculture and sustainability are blended in a manner (content, delivery, assessment) that prevents the possibility of them being considered as distinct silos.
- 3.3.3 Review the content of previously validated modules to ensure the content is reflective of current knowledge and research in the area.
- 3.3.4 Review modules (title, content, delivery, assessment) in relation to award type and title being advanced.
- 3.3.5 Review modules to ensure consistency of content in relation to resources.
- 3.3.6 Review the language being deployed in modules to ensure no bias towards a particular philosophy is being inadvertently relayed
- 3.3.7 Consider deploying the use of technology to augment the student learning experience through increased exposure to expert speakers from industry, research, academia etc. and to offset any expertise deficits in the programme team.
- 3.3.8 Review the quantum and nature of assessments across the programmes.
- 3.3.9 Consider integrative assessments as a means of reducing assessment load.
- 3.3.10 Consider opportunities for co-design, co-authoring of content and assessments between TUS and Gurteen academic staff.
- 3.3.11 Review the ratio of formative to summative assessments.
- 3.3.12 Consider the submission format for assessments and the potential of allowing students to submit video, audio or alternative to written submissions.

- 3.3.13 Develop a work placement network to support an enhanced student experience with increased opportunities for enhanced learning and mobility.
- 3.3.14 Continue to review and look at opportunities for students to complete their work placement abroad building on existing networks that are in place such as the RUN-EU network.

Module Recommendations

- 3.3.15 *Animal Production*, consider revising LO3 and the context of this within the module.
- 3.3.16 *Forestry*, review the role Forestry has on all farms and enterprise, Forestry is sometimes seen as a separate enterprise, and should be integrated more across the programme.
- 3.3.17 Review the 70% grade for the final exam in the *Tillage Crop Management* module.
- 3.3.18 Explore holistic management practices for the *Dairy Product Management* module. Look at how KPI's are addressed and interpreted in terms of a sustainability perspective.
- 3.3.19 Explore content on how to reduce the risk as a business in module, *Farm Business*. Examine introducing True Cost Accounting in this module.
- 3.3.20 Review the number of learning outcomes and the 4 pieces of coursework assessment in the *Grassland Management and Nutrient Management Planning* module. Consider more analytical, assessment type work as opposed to report-writing.
- 3.3.21 Consider how to integrate concepts into earlier lectures e.g: nutrient planning in module *Extension and Innovation in Agriculture*.
- 3.3.22 Encourage students to link with their placement provider for Final year project topics and ideas.
- 3.3.23 Consider the integration of content on food quality (decline in nutrient density etc) in *Introduction to Environmental Impacts of Agriculture* module.
- 3.3.24 Fix typo in *Agriculture Final Year Project* from secondary literature to primary literature.

3.4 Commendations and Observations

- 3.4.1 The panel commends the programme team on the development of an excellent programme in a discipline area of great importance to industry.
- 3.4.2 The Panel commends the programme teams on the quality of the programme documentation which has been developed to a high standard.

3.4.3 The Panel notes and commends the degree of work conducted by the Department during the Programmatic Review and notes the extensive stakeholder consultation in particular.

3.4.4 The panel would like to commend the quality of the engagement and innovation with other stakeholders across the region.

Observation

3.4.5 It was noted by the panel that there is an opportunity to explore the potential of the programme meeting the Teaching Council of Ireland requirements for graduates to pursue a P.M.E. in the area of Agricultural Science.

Michèle Glacken

Signature of Chairperson

21,4,2022

Date