TUS Policy for Taught Programme Validation and Modification 2025 - 2030

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Contents

1.0   Introduction

As a Designated Awarding Body, subject to the Technological Universities Act (2018) [1] and the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act (2012) as amended (2019)[2], the Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest (hereafter referred to as TUS or the Technological University) is a self-accrediting university and responsible for the validation/re-validation of programmes leading to awards in its name, including joint awards. It is also responsible for monitoring the quality, and academic quality assurance, of those awards. A particular function of TUS Academic Council under Chapter 5 (17) (3) (a)(b) of the 2018 Act is designing and developing programmes for the Technological University and supporting the implementation of those programmes)[1].

The TUS approach to academic quality assurance for programme validation ensures that a learner may attain the knowledge, skill or competence for the purpose of an award which is consistent with the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ)[3] and fulfils requirements in relation to Technological University and QQI Policy on Access, Transfer and Progression[4]. The application of this Policy and associated Procedures provides the academic quality assurance framework to ensure that programmes, offered by TUS, have academic and intellectual currency and standards appropriate to the level of the respective award and comparable to equivalent awards offered both nationally and internationally.

TUS operates in a rapidly changing environment and recognises the requirement to effectively and efficiently respond, in an agile manner, to both the needs of learners and the development of a programme portfolio that supports its mission and strategy and the creation of a knowledge society and economy. This policy and its associated procedures are designed to provide a robust quality assurance framework for programme development, validation, and modification, while enabling TUS to respond in an agile manner to fulfill its mission and meet the needs of its key stakeholders.

2.0   Scope

This policy applies to all Taught Programmes at both undergraduate and postgraduate level, including collaborative and joint programmes, leading to (1) Major and Non-major awards at Level 6 to Level 9 on the NFQ and (2) TUS Certificates of Completion for Programmes of 1 – 9 ECTS credit volume range. Accordingly,

1) All new taught programmes shall be designed and developed in adherence with the policy.

2) All changes made to programmes, outside of programmatic review, arising from on-going monitoring and review, shall comply with this policy.

The Policy should be read in conjunction with the accompanying *TUS Procedures for Programme Validation and Modification*[5] and with the wider Academic Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook, [6] including, but not limited to:

- TUS Policy and Procedures for Collaborative Provision (National and Transnational);[7]
- TUS Policy for Participation in the European approach for the QA of Joint Programmes; [8]
- TUS Academic Regulations for Taught Programmes;[9]
- TUS Policy for Exit Awards; [10]
- TUS Policy and Procedures on Digital Badges; [11]
- TUS Student Placement Policy; [12]
- Putting Learning First: TUS Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy[13].

All programmes offered through collaborative provision, nationally and transnationally, require full validation in line with the *TUS Policy and Procedures for Collaborative Provision (National and Transnational)[7]*.

Programme development teams are requested to utilise the following resources to assist during the process of programme development and validation:

1. Putting Learning first: TUS Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy.[13]
2. TUS Graduate Attributes Framework[14]
3. TUS Guide to Writing and Using Learning Outcomes[15]
4. TUS Compendium of Approaches to Internationalisation of the Home Curriculum. [16]
5. TUS Compendium of Embedding Education for Sustainable Development in Teaching, Learning and Assessment. [17]

Separate policies apply to the TUS postgraduate research programme portfolio, for programmes leading to awards at Level 9 and Level 10 on the NFQ, including the *TUS Postgraduate Research Regulations*[18]. A separate *TUS Policy and Procedures on Digital Badges* [11] applies to the development of digital badges, which in TUS are non-credit bearing.

A set of definitions of relevant terms used in the Policy are provided in Appendix 1.

3.0   Statutory and Regulatory Context

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) is the state agency responsible for the external quality assurance of higher education and training in Ireland and is the custodian of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). Its functions are set out in the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act (2012).[2]

TUS is a Technological University and Designated Awarding Body (DAB) founded under the Technological Universities Act (2018).[1] It derives its authority to make awards from law. In accordance with Section 17 (1) if the TU Act, TUS Academic Council controls *"the academic affairs of the technological university, including the curriculum of, and instruction and education provided by, the technological university"*. Further, in accordance with Section 17 (3) (a) of the Act, a function of Academic Council includes *"designing and developing programmes for the technological university"*. [1]

As an autonomous DAB, TUS is subject to external quality assurance at Institutional level. TUS is not subject to external quality assurance at programme level and in accordance with European and National Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines, TUS is responsible for designing appropriate policy and procedures for the design, validation and approval of its programmes of education and training as part of its internal quality assurance framework.

The awards offered by TUS shall be in accordance with the quality assurance obligations of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012[2] *Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines developed by QQI for Designated Awarding Bodies (2016)*[19]   and the *Joint-Sectoral Protocol between Designated Awarding Bodies and Quality and Qualifications Ireland for the Inclusion of Qualifications within the National Framework of Qualifications (2022)*[20]. TUS operates systems for ECTS credit accumulation and credit transfer consistent with the *Principles and Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of Credit in Irish Higher Education*[21] and consistent with the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation Scheme (ECTS)[22].

4.0   Irish National and European Framework of Qualification

The Irish NFQ was established in 2003 as a framework for the development, recognition, and award of qualifications in the State. The NFQ has 10 levels designed to promote and allow progression of learners through the ladder of levels in the framework. Each level sets out a range of standards of knowledge, skill and

competence acquired by learners. Levels are not in themselves standards but indicators of a range of standards and can be described in an ordered sequence. Various award types exist at each level, as illustrated in Figure 1.
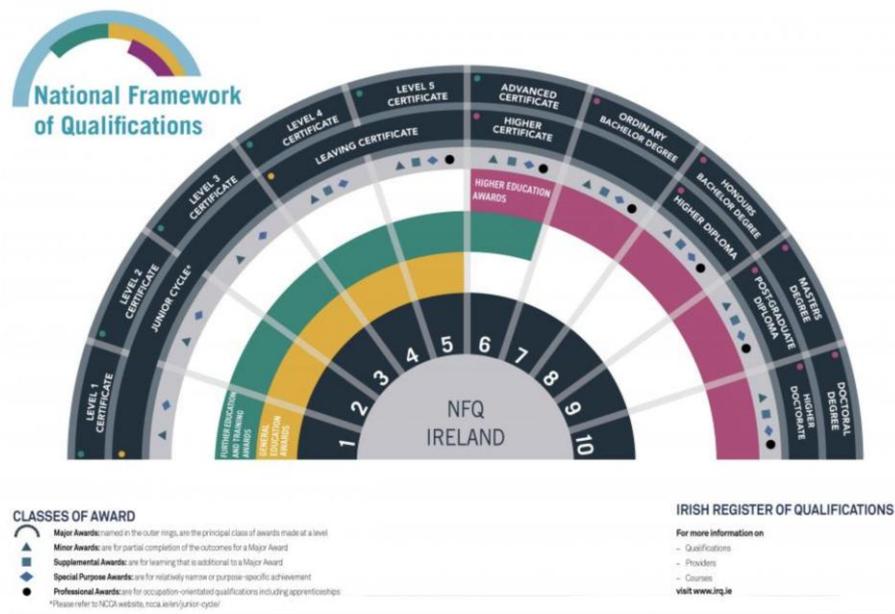
Figure 1. The National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ)

Thus, the NFQ classifies the level, class of award and type of Qualifications. The system is based on levels of knowledge, skill and competence and aims to promote greater transparency and trust in qualifications. All awards made by TUS are included in the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

The European Qualifications Framework (EQF)[23] is a common European reference framework. The core of the EQF is its eight levels defined in terms of learning outcomes which express what individuals know, understand, and can do at the end of a learning process. The framework enables transparency, comparability and portability of qualifications and makes it possible to compare qualifications from different countries and institutions. The NFQ has been formally aligned with the EQF enabling international comparison of all awards across the European Higher Education Area (Appendix 2).

5.0   TUS Awards Framework (Taught Programmes)

TUS offers a range of taught programmes leading to awards of the NFQ, from Level 6 to Level 9. The NFQ is an explicit reference point for this *TUS Policy for Taught Programme Validation and Modification*. TUS observes norms and practices to ensure that it is appropriate that its awards be regarded as awards included within the NFQ, at the appropriate respective levels. This enables the statutory inclusion of relevant

TUS qualifications within the NFQ, in a consistent, transparent manner, in line with the *Joint Sectoral Protocol between DAB's and QQI for the Inclusion of Qualifications within the National Framework of Qualifications (2022)*[20].

5.1   TUS Awards Classes and Types – An Overview

The award classes on the NFQ are Major Awards, Minor Awards, Special Purpose Awards, and Professional Awards, often categorised as Major and Non-major awards.

In summary;

- Major Awards are the main type of awards made at each level of the NFQ and constitute a significant volume of learning,

- Minor Awards are a subset of a major award and provide recognition for the achievement of a range of learning outcomes,

- Supplemental Awards are for learning that is additional to a previous major or special purpose award, and at the same level of that award,

- Special Purpose Awards have a distinct identity which reflects their clearly defined but relatively narrow purpose,

- Professional Awards are a distinct class of awards within the NFQ that formally recognise the achievement of professional knowledge, skills, and competences required for practice in specific occupational or professional contexts.
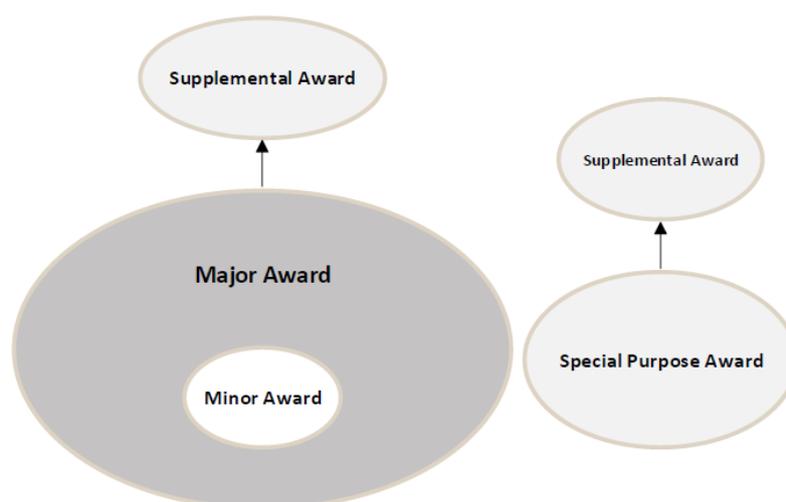
Figure 2. Inter-relationship at Award Level between Major, Minor, Supplemental and Special Purpose Awards (Note: while the ECTS credits for a Special Purpose Award may, in some instances, derive from a Major Award, the Special Purpose Award is a distinct entity.

The lower cut-off for Non-major Awards is 10 ECTS credits and therefore a learning

volume for 1 – 9 ECTS does not constitute an award of the NFQ (C.f. Section 5.7, Microcredentials). TUS issues a Certificate of Completion to learners who have completed a programme in this range or, in some circumstances, may issue a Single Subject Certificate for the completion of a constituent module of a larger award.

Programmes must meet credit requirements for the particular award type and class at each level of the NFQ. A summary of the award classes and types offered by TUS, and the associated ECTS credit volume/range for completing associated taught programmes are presented in Table 1. Further detail, including naming conventions, and TUS award standards, provided in Sections 5.2 to 5.7.

Table 1. Summary of TUS Award Classes and Award Types including NFQ Level and ECTS Range

Category	NFQ Award Class	NFQ Level	Award Type	ECTS Credit Volume
Major Award of the NFQ	Undergraduate Major Awards	6 - 8	Higher Certificate	120
			Ordinary Bachelor Degree (Ab-initio)	180
			Ordinary Bachelor Degree (Add-on)	60
			Honours Bachelor Degree (Ab-initio)	180-240
			Honours Bachelor Degree (Add-on)	60
			Higher Diploma	60
	Postgraduate Major Awards (Taught)	9	Postgraduate Diploma	60
		9	Masters Degree (Taught)	60 - 120
Non-major Award of the NFQ	• Minor Awards *(always linked to a major award)* • Special Purpose Awards *(specific areas of learning that have a narrow scope)* • Supplemental Awards *(learning which is additional to a previous award)*	6	Certificate	≥ 10
		7, 8	Certificate	≥ 10 and < 60
		7, 8	Diploma	≥ 60
		9	Certificate	≥ 10 and < 30
		9	Postgraduate Certificate	≥ 30
TUS Certificate of Completion	Not an award of the NFQ	-	TUS Certificate of Completion or Single Subject Certificates	1 – 9
TUS Digital Badge	Not an award of the NFQ *(C.f. TUS Policy and Procedures on Digital Badges[11])*	-	TUS Digital Badge	Non-credit Bearing

Note: In TUS, NFQ Non-major awards from 1 – 30 ECTS Credits and Certificates of Completion for 1 – 9 ECTS are also referred to as Microcredentials.

5.2   TUS Major Awards (Taught Programmes)

Major awards are the principal class of awards made at each level of the NFQ. Such award types capture a typical range of achievements at the designated level. They include a substantial Volume of learning in terms of ECTS credits (Table 1) and their programme learning outcomes represent all eight sub-strands of knowledge, skill and competence appropriate to the NFQ Level and Award Standard. Intended learning outcomes of major award programmes emphasise profound learning outcomes.

The following criteria shall apply to TUS Major Awards:

1) In accordance with the *QQI Policy and Criteria for Making Awards* (2017)[24], all TUS Major Awards shall have the following form:

    [Stem; **Named Award]** in **[Specialisation]**

    The Stem shall be standardised in accordance with the relevant named award and the applicable TUS Award Standard, while the Specialisation is agreed at validation as the programme title.

    Examples:
    - [Higher Certificate in Science] in [Applied Biology]
    - [Bachelor of Business] in [Business]
    - [Bachelor of Arts (Honours)] in [Fine Art]
    - [Master of Engineering] in [Mechanical Engineering]

2) Major awards must have at least 60 credits at the level associated with the award class.

3) In some instances, the Bachelor (Honours) award class may be designed with a minimum of 180 ECTS, with permission from TUS Academic Council. However, at least 60 ECTS must be at Level 8 to meet the requirements of the award class. The threshold of 240 ECTS is the norm in TUS.

4) Major Awards shall be validated by the Major Awards Validation Procedures as outlined in the TUS Programme Validation and Modification Procedures document accompanying this policy.

5.3   TUS Minor Awards

Minor awards are awards that recognise the attainment of part of a major award and which has relevance in its own right. Accordingly, all Minor Awards shall be linked to a specified approved major award.[24]
- Minor awards are also commonly referred to as component certificates and while having relevance in their own right, are always part of at least one major

award.

- Minor awards provide recognition for learners who achieve a range of learning outcomes, but not the specific combination of learning outcomes required for a major award. This recognition will have relevance in its own right. Therefore they facilitate the recognition of part of the learning outcomes of a major award.

- Minor Awards will always be smaller in volume than the major award of which they are a part. The volume of learning shall not be less than 10 ECTS Credits.[24]

- Minor awards must have all of its ECTS credits at the NFQ level indicated for the award.

The following criteria shall apply to TUS Minor Awards:

1) A Student who has demonstrated that they have attained the learning outcomes of Stage 1 of a Level 6, Level 7 or Level 8 programme may seek a Minor Award of Certificate, Level 6, 60 ECTS Credits, linked to the respective Major Award. In this context, Stage 1 of any Major Award may be defined as a Level 6 Minor Award in the generic discipline.

2) The details of any additional Minor Awards should be identified at the programme validation stage, including the designated ECTS Credit Requirements and associated Programme Learning Outcomes (of the Major Award).

5.4   TUS Special Purpose Awards

Special Purpose Awards are stand-alone awards with a distinctive identity reflecting a clearly defined purpose. Special Purpose Awards derive their currency from the particular context of their use, such as individual fields of employment. The volume of learning shall be between 10 ECTS and 60 ECTS Credits. They are Programmes in their own right with an associated set of Programme Learning Outcomes. These Programme Learning Outcomes may be mapped to the sub-strands of knowledge, skill and competency of the relevant award standard. Given that the *volume of learning* can vary for a given SPA, it may not always be possible to map to all individual (eight) sub-strands of knowledge, skill and competence of the relevant award standard, particularly in the lower ECTS volume range. Special purpose awards must have all credits at the level indicated for the award.

While Special Purpose Awards are stand-alone awards, their ECTS Credits can be derived from a Major Award and validated as a Special Purpose Award Programme.

The *TUS Policy on Recognition of Prior Learning*[25] includes a Special Regulation for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) using TUS Special Purpose Awards. TUS Special Purpose Awards may be used to accumulate credits from prior certified learning, using the TUS RPL Exemptions Process, towards achieving the following awards:

a) a Graduate Certificate (Special Purpose Award, 30 Credits);
b) a Major Award, including Level 6 Higher Certificate, Level 7 Degree, Level 8 Honours Degree, Level 8 Higher Diploma or Level 9 Postgraduate Diploma.

The use of the TUS RPL Special Regulation as an access, transfer and progression pathway in this manner should be indicated in the relevant access, transfer and progression sections of the Programme Specification document at the point of programme validation of the higher award.

The prior certified learning (in the form of a TUS Special Purpose Award) may entitle an Applicant to Exemptions on the relevant programme. The associated credits will be transferred with the consent of the learner from the Special Purpose Award to the respective Award (Graduate Certificate or Major Award) (C.f. Section 12 of the *TUS Policy on Recognition of Prior Learning*.[25]

5.5   TUS Supplemental Awards

Supplemental awards are for learning which is additional to a previously completed award. Programmes leading to such awards may be described as refresher, updating or continuing education and training, with respect to an occupation or profession. In some cases, there may be linked to continued compliance with regulatory requirements in respect of the initial award.

Supplemental awards must have all credits at the level indicated for the supplemental award. Supplemental awards are not at a higher level than the initial award.

5.6   Naming Conventions and Validation of TUS Non-major Awards

1) Based on a minimum credit volume of 10 ECTS, all Minor, Special Purpose and Supplemental Awards shall adhere to the following convention with respect to the [Stem] and [Specialisation] (See Table 2 for Summary under *Award Type*):

a) Level 6 awards, irrespective of credit volume, shall commence with the title **[Certificate in]** followed by **[Specialisation]**;

b) Level 7 and 8 awards with credit volume in the range of 10 to 59 ECTS inclusive shall commence with the title **[Certificate in]** followed by

[**Specialisation**];

   c) Level 7 and Level 8 awards with credit volume of 60 ECTS or more shall commence with the title [**Diploma in]** followed by [**Specialisation**];

   d) Level 9 awards with credit volume in the range of 10 to 29 ECTS inclusive, shall commence with the title [**Certificate in**] followed by [**Specialisation**];

   e) Level 9 awards with credit volume in the range of 30 to 59 ECTS inclusive, shall commence with the title [Postgraduate **Certificate in]**' followed by [**Specialisation**].

The Stem name, as defined above, shall be standard for the respective awards, while the title of the specialisation is agreed at Validation.

2) Non-major awards shall be validated and approved using the Validation Procedure for Non-major awards outlined in the TUS Programme Validation Procedures document accompanying this policy.

3) Non-major awards may be validated during the validation of a major award if they are identified and presented for validation as part of that process.

5.7   TUS Micro-credentials

The European Commission 2022[26] defined Micro-credential as follows: a *micro-credential is a record of the learning outcomes that a learner has acquired following a small volume of learning. These learning outcomes have been assessed against transparent and clearly defined standards. Courses leading to Micro-credentials are designed to provide the learner with specific knowledge, skills and competencies that respond to societal, personal, cultural, or labor market needs".*

TUS notes that the term Micro-credential is currently not listed as an award class on the NFQ, but that it is a term that has gained significant traction nationally and internationally. For the purpose of programme validation by TUS, and consistent with practice nationally, a Micro-credential at TUS is a programme underpinned by quality assurance with the following attributes (Table 2):

1) a volume of between 1 and 9 ECTS leading to a TUS Certificate of Completion at NFQ 6 to 9;

2) a volume of between 10 and 30 ECTS, leading to a minor, special purpose or supplemental award at NFQ 6 to 9;

3) designed to meet a current market need for which there is demonstrable learner demand and value.

Table 2. TUS Microcredentials Summary[1]

	ECTS Volume	Award of NFQ	Award Type
(1)	1 – 9	No	TUS Certificate of Completion
(2)	≥ 10 and < 30	Yes	Non-major award of the NFQ Certificate in [Specialisation]

All TUS Micro-credential programmes shall be validated and approved using the Validation Procedure for Non-major awards outlined in the *TUS Procedures for Programme Validation and Modification*[5] accompanying this policy.

In accordance with Section 67 (1)(b) of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012, if Microcredentials do not lead to an award included within the NFQ, a learner must be so informed in the context of statutory obligations relating to the provision of information to learners. For Microcredentials in the 1 – 9 ECTS range leading to TUS Certificate of Completion, learners shall be so informed in relevant programme promotional materials.[2]

5.8   TUS Award Standards (Taught Programmes)

Awards Standards refer to the knowledge, skill, or competence to be acquired, and where appropriate, demonstrated by a learner before a specified qualification may be awarded. The NFQ Award-type Descriptors and NFQ Grid Level Indicators constitute generalised standards for qualifications included within the NFQ.[3] As a DAB, TUS is responsible for its own award standards and ensuring that they are consistent with relevant NFQ Award Descriptors and Grid Level indicators.

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[1] In TUS, the Term Microcredential refers to (1) programmes of 1 – 9 ECTS Credit range (leading to a TUS Certificate of Completion) and (2) programme of 10 – 30 ECTS leading to Non-major Awards included in the NFQ (Certificate in [followed by Specialisation]). Cross reference Table 1. Summary of TUS Award Classes and Award Types including NFQ Level and ECTS Range.

[2] Suggested wording for inclusion in relevant programme promotional material of Microcredentials of 1 – 9 ECTS: *This Microcredential programme bears [insert number] ECTS Credits and leads to the issue of a TUS Certificate of Completion for this accredited learning. It does not lead to an award on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).*

TUS determines an award standard for each of its NFQ qualifications. The award standard is a statement of the knowledge, skill, and competence to be acquired by a student before an award is made. The award standard for a particular named award is then elaborated in the statement of minimum intended programme learning outcomes, agreed as part of the programme validation and approval process. An award is only conferred if the programme learning outcomes have been achieved.

The following applies to all TUS NFQ Awards:

1) TUS ensures that all awards are aligned to the NFQ and conform to the levels set out in the NFQ Grid Level Descriptors;

2) TUS Academic Council has formally adopted the QQI Award Standards and incorporated these into its curriculum management system for programme building;

3) An award standard may also be proposed for a discipline where a QQI adopted standard is not available. Where a new award standard is proposed it must be formally approved by the Academic Council;

The TUS adopted Award Standards (QQI) are available in Appendix 3. These include:
- Generic Major Award Standards (NFQ Levels 6-10);
- Generic Standards for Minor; Special Purpose; and Supplemental Award-Types;
- Disciplinary Award Standards;
- Professional Awards at NFQ Levels 6 – 9.

The *TUS Guide to Writing and Using Learning Outcomes*[15] is a useful reference point for the alignment of learning outcomes to award standards.

6.0   Validation Criteria for New TUS Awards

The TUS new programme validation processes for taught programmes are guided by the following explicit validation criteria. A taught programme shall be developed and assessed against these validation criteria during the phases of development and self-assessment in addition to the external validation assessment. These validation criteria are as follows:

1. The programme is consistent with the TUS Strategy and meets authentic education and training needs;

2. The rationale for the programme is well informed, justified, and uses an evidence base to illustrate demand;

3. There is an appropriate emphasis on access, transfer, and progression, including due consideration for the provision of embedded (exit) awards/add-on awards, as appropriate.

4. The programme aims and learning outcomes are clear, align with the proposed award title and are specified in a manner consistent with the relevant TUS Awards Standards.

5. The standards of knowledge, skills and competencies are appropriately articulated.

6. The design of the programme should enable its target learners to attain the minimum intended programme learning outcomes, in terms of learner effort.

7. The teaching and learning strategy is well planned, appropriate for the discipline area and type of award, and aligns with the *Putting Learning First: TUS Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy*[13] *and TUS Graduate Attributes Framework*.[14]

8. Assessment techniques are valid, fair and consistent and provide for the verification of the attainment of the intended learning outcomes and academic standard to be achieved by students.

9. The programme is viable and contains adequate and appropriate reference to required resources to support the teaching, learning and assessment strategy for the programme.

10. The mode of delivery is consistent with the needs of the intended students of the programme, with accessible and appropriate support services provided for.

7.0   Overarching Programme Structure Considerations for Major Awards

Programmes are normally divided into *stages* and *modules*. Conceptually, a stage is a rung on a progression ladder. It may comprise of a set of modules at a similar level. Typically, the NFQ level of the intended learning outcomes of constituent modules increases as a learner progresses through successive stages of a programme. Even where modules are not taken in parallel, the stage concept is important for grouping modules with the same level (NFQ) of learning and requiring a similar level of maturity in the relevant discipline.

7.1   TUS Undergraduate Major Awards

1) TUS Major Awards shall have no less than 60 ECTS Credits at the award level.

2) The ECTS Credit Requirements that shall apply to the named NFQ Level 6 to Level 8 awards are indicated in Table 3.

Table 3. ECTS Credit Requirements of Major Awards at respective NFQ Levels.

Named Award	Total Number of Credits	Level 6 Credits	Level 7 Credits	Level 8 Credits
Higher Certificate	120	120	-	-
Ab-initio Ordinary Bachelor Degree	180	120	60	-
Ab-initio Honours Bachelor Degree	180	60	60	60
Ab-initio Honours Bachelor Degree	240	120	60	60
Add-on Ordinary Bachelor Degree	-	-	60	
Add-on Honours Bachelor Degree	-	-	-	60
Higher Diploma	-	-	-	60

7.2   TUS Postgraduate Major Awards (Taught Mode)

1) TUS Level 9 Postgraduate Diploma shall have 60 credits at the award level.

2) TUS Level 9 Master's Degree (Taught Mode) shall have 60 – 120 credits at the award level. A volume of 90 ECTS is the norm for Taught Masters in TUS.

7.3   Embedded and Add-on Awards

It is TUS policy to maximise progression opportunities for Students in line with National policy on Access, Transfer and Progression. Due consideration should be given to the

development of programme and award pathways, with the inclusion of embedded programmes (exit points) and add-on awards (progression opportunities), as appropriate.

Embedded programme(s) are programme(s) incorporated within a major award. They can lead to major or minor award in their own right and may be offered directly to students, or as an Exit Award only. A student who does not complete the requirements of the programme for which they are, or were registered on, but who has gained the credits and achieved the learning outcomes specified for an embedded programme, can apply for an exit award.[10]

The design and inclusion of embedded and add-on programmes should be considered during the design of the highest major award, as outlined in Table 4. Embedded programmes must meet the requirements of 60 ECTS at, or above the level of the award class on the NFQ.

Table 4. Embedded Programmes

Highest Major Award	Embedded Programmes
Higher Certificate	N/A
Bachelor (Ordinary)	Higher Certificate
Bachelor (Honours)	Bachelor (Ordinary) and/or Higher Certificate
Masters (Taught) Degree	Postgraduate Diploma and/or Postgraduate Certificate

Add-on programmes are important progression points on a ladder of progression if the highest major award is a Higher Certificate or Ordinary Bachelor Degree.

Embedded and add-on programmes are validated in their own right and must independently meet the validation criteria for the respective award at the indicated level of the NFQ.

7.4   ECTS Credits

ECTS credits represent the learner workload and defined learning outcomes of a given programme. The workload is determined based on 20 – 25 hours of learner effort per credit. It is noted that a module does not always require direct teaching as such, but always requires learning and assessment in line with ECTS.

The ECTS system makes it possible to merge different types of learning, such as

university and work-integrated learning within the same programme of study. ECTS credits can be accumulated through the successful completion of modules to contribute to an award.

7.5   Stage-Based Programme Structure

Programmes are normally divided into stages and modules. The stage concept is important for grouping modules with the same NFQ level of learning and requiring a similar level of maturity in the relevant discipline. TUS operates a stage-based programme structure which is underpinned by the following guidelines. Generally, the following criteria apply:

a) Programmes are organised into one or more Stages:

1) for undergraduate taught programmes leading to a major award, a stage is defined as an academic year, and the associated workload is 60 ECTS;

2) for postgraduate taught programmes leading to a major award, a stage may be defined as an academic year (60 ECTS) or a calendar year. The maximum workload associated with a calendar year is up to 90 ECTS;

3) for Special Purpose, supplemental and minor awards, a stage may be defined as a semester, academic year or calendar year depending on programme and number of credits.

b) A Stage may be divided into Semesters. A semester has a total of 15 weeks to include module delivery, revision, and assessment;

c) Student workload should be balanced across the stage;

d) The contact hours should decrease and independent learning increase as students' progress through the stages of a programme;

e) The proportion of time allocated to independent learning should be higher for programmes at higher levels of the NFQ;

f) The programme's prerequisite learning specification shall include the knowledge, skill and competence specified at lower NFQ levels;

g) Students must have passed or obtained exemption through Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) for the modules listed as pre-requisite before the module can be attempted.

8.0   Programme and Module Design Considerations

8.1   Programme Delivery Mode

There are two aspects to defining the delivery mode of a programme:

1. Programmes designed for full-time or part-time participation;

2. Delivery of module content by in-person, blended or online mode.

In general, full-time learners' study all the modules in a stage in parallel, while part-time learners may study as little as one module at a time. Typically, 60 ECTS credits represents the workload of a full-time student for one academic year, and these credits are divided into the constituent modules of a given stage. Variations may apply in the context of Flexible Learning Provision. TUS is currently developing a revised Policy on Blended and Online Learning.

Programme Boards should give full consideration to ensuring that all new programme development includes validation of programmes in Full Time and Part-time, blended or online modes, as appropriate. It is emphasised that subsequent introduction of a different delivery mode shall necessitate a further validation process for that mode. The development and delivery of part-time programmes needs to carefully consider the balance of directed and self-directed learning, when compared to full-time programmes. This normally involves a re-orientation of Directed Learning and Independent/Self-directed learning hours, for the part-time learner (irrespective of the delivery mode), while ensuring that total learner effort remains the same.

8.2   Award Standard and Programme Title

In designing a programme, the programme learning outcomes shall be aligned with reference to the appropriate TUS award standard (Section 5.8). The following criteria shall apply to award standard and title considerations.

1) the award title shall be consistent with the chosen award standard and the applicable level of the award. The rationale for the choice of award standard and award title must be justifiable;

2) the award title and award standard shall have regard for the primary discipline or disciplines (for multidisciplinary programmes);

3) the award standard shall be consistent with the programme learning outcomes;

4) the award title shall appropriately reflect the programme content and be consistent with the expectations of employers and potential students, as appropriate;

5) the award and programme title nomenclature shall follow the convention outlined

in [Section 5.1](#).

8.3   The Approved Programme Schedule

Taught programmes at TUS are designed and structured into components known as modules. The number of stages and allocation of ECTS credits to a stage is defined in the Approved Programme Schedule (APS). The APS:

1) indicates the suite of modules and thus the allocation of ECTS credits for each module for a given stage of a programme;
2) incorporates the delivery mode, elective pathways if applicable, and the assessment strategy;
3) defines any programme or module-specific Special Regulations.

The programme must be delivered and assessed according to the APS and changes to the APS are subject to quality assurance processes as outlined in [Section 9.0](#).

8.4   Programme Learning Outcomes (PLO's)

Programme design is based on a learning outcomes-based approach.

a) Programme learning outcomes shall be aligned with the applicable TUS Award Standard ([Section 5.8](#)), and define the standards of knowledge, skill and competence upon successful completion of a programme.

b) Typically, a programme leading to Major Award should have 8 to 12 PLOs defined in a manner that expresses profound learning outcomes at the higher programme level. They should map to all eight strands and sub-strands of knowledge, skill and competency of the relevant award standard.

c) A programme leading to a Minor, Special Purpose or Supplemental Award will typically have less PLOs defined and does not require a PLO to align to each of the eight award standard sub-strands.

8.5   Programme Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy

The programme document shall describe the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy for the proposed programme. The Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy should demonstrate the appropriateness of the pedagogical approaches and mode of delivery used to deliver the programme for the achievement of the programme aims, objectives and learning outcomes. In general, the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy shall:

a) align with *Putting Learning First: TUS Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy*; [13]

b) take due account of the *TUS Graduates Attributes Framework*; [14]

c) endeavor to provide a supportive and engaging learning environment that enables students to achieve their full potential, while promoting academic excellence and, where possible, innovative pedagogy;

d) outline the methods and criteria for assessing student learning, including the use of formative and summative assessments, and feedback mechanisms;

e) be cogniscant of the impact of Generative Artificial Intelligence and adopt appropriate approaches into the teaching, learning and assessment strategy at the programme design stage;

f) be informed by the principles of Universal Design for Learning to facilitate the needs of diverse student cohorts and embed Universal Design in quality assurance, programme design and programme validation processes, in accordance with the Altitude Charter, adopted by TUS in 2025.

8.6 Inclusion of Work-integrated Learning/Work Placement

Work-integrated learning refers to the integration of planned learning activities within a programme that involves the meaningful practice of work, and which are delivered in conjunction with a workplace partner. These activities are designed to support work integrated learning within the programme and can take a variety of forms (e.g. internships, placements, the on-the-job components of apprenticeships, projects for industry, *inter alia*). They may take place entirely in a work setting (including online, in the workplace, or in the community), entirely within an education provider, or a combination of both. Such activities may constitute a small or very significant proportion of the programme and it is possible that multiple such activities are included in the programme and over different stages of a programme.

Due consideration should be given to the inclusion of Work-integrated learning/Work placement during programme design and development at TUS. In line with *TUS Strategic Plan*[27] and *TUS Student Placement Policy*[28], all Level 8 ab-initio programmes shall incorporate a Work Placement. Where Work Placement is part of a student's programme of study, it is normally designed to contribute to the overall learning outcomes of the programme and will normally carry an appropriate level of ECTS.

8.7 Overarching Module Considerations

Modules are allocated credits consistent with the ECTS and are accompanied by a

module descriptor indicating learning outcomes and associated workload, indicative content, and assessment criteria. Modules shall also indicate any necessary dependencies between modules by specifying pre-requisites and/or co-requisites. Co-requisite modules must be taken in parallel and represent dependencies between modules in a given stage. Programme development teams should be cogniscant of not creating unnecessary barriers to entry or progression, in the context of considering the inclusion of pre-requisites and co-requisites. The following shall inform module design:

a) modules at TUS must be designed in multiples of 5 ECTS (with the sole exception of Micro-credentials in the range of 1 – 9 ECTS);

b) modules shall indicate the level on the NFQ at which the learning outcomes are specified and assessed;

c) module learning outcomes must align with the PLOs to achieve the overall aim of the programme.

d) typically, a 5 ECTS credit module shall have 3 – 5 learning outcomes; a 10 or 15 ECTS credit module shall have 5 – 8 learning outcomes and a 30 ECTS credit module shall have 8 – 12 learning outcomes. Note, these are typical or indicative figures as a general guide, with the actual number determined by the module proposer/programme team and agreed at validation;

e) module learning outcomes should align with Blooms Taxonomy of the cognitive domain and be expressed using measurable active verbs;[15]

f) capstone modules and stages are designed to provide an opportunity for learners to integrate learning attained in other modules and stages and are always necessary;

g) due consideration should be given to the provision of electives and any elective pathway constraints should be explicit and appropriate, considering the intended programme learning outcomes;

8.8   Module Assessment Strategies

Students demonstrate the achievement of learning outcomes through assessment. The *TUS Academic Regulations for Taught Programmes* specify the regulations and standards for student assessment and these regulations shall be adhered to in the design of a programme. The following criteria should be adhered to when designing assessment:

a) the type and timing of assessments shall be specified in order to prepare an assessment schedule for a programme;

b) special assessment regulations shall be stipulated on the APS where they apply (in general, modules should be designed using learning outcomes and assessment methodologies that minimise the need for special regulations);

c) a repeat assessment strategy shall be specified for each module.

8.9   Embedding Education for Sustainability Development

TUS is committed to sustainable development and places a priority on embedding Education for Sustainability Development (ESD) in the curriculum. Accordingly, efforts should be made to embed sustainability in programmes and modules to ensure learners acquire knowledge, skills, values, and dispositions to promote, advance and act for sustainable development. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a framework through which programmes teams can consider different dimensions of sustainable development which TUS supports through an accredited *Certificate in Embedding Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in the Curriculum*.

"ESD empowers learners to take informed decisions and responsible actions for environmental integrity, economic viability and a just society, for present and future generations, while respecting cultural diversity" (UNESCO, 2020).[29] ESD relies not only on providing sustainability knowledge, but on informing/building new worldviews and developing sustainability competences such as systems thinking, anticipatory competency and others (UNESCO, 2012). A specific target (Target 4.7) of SDG 4 (Quality Education) focuses on ESD *"By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development.."* (UNESCO, 2015).[30]

Sustainable development can be addressed by considering some or all the social, economic, environmental and cultural pillars of sustainability and thus there are opportunities for all disciplines to embed sustainability within their programmes. This can be done through programme and module design, assessment, engagement, placement and other areas of programme delivery. Addressing ESD also contributes to ensuring TUS graduates are global citizens and will be positioned to contribute to sustainable development in their future careers. The *TUS Compendium of Embedding Education for Sustainable Development in Teaching, Learning and Assessment* provides a useful reference point.[17]

8.10 Internationalisation of the Curriculum and Admission of International Students

The programme design should provide students with an international dimension to their studies. Specific module learning outcomes which require students to develop global perspectives in the context of their discipline, and where relevant, support language and cultural education, should be considered. Further opportunities to enhance internationalisation of the programme, such as educational partnerships, students exchanges and faculty exchanges, both physical and virtual should be considered. The *TUS Compendium of Approaches for Internationalisation of the Home Curriculum* provides a useful reference point.[16]

If the programme is to be accessed by international students, appropriate provisions should be made in line with the *QQI Code of Practice for Provision of Education to International Learners* (2015)[31]).

The Department of Justice defines eligibility criteria and arrangement applying to higher education and professional programmes for admission of international students. This includes the following criteria as reproduced from the Interim List of Eligible Programme (ILEP):[32]

a) Duration, volume and attendance requirements

'Programmes in the Higher Education Programmes leading to Major Awards/Non-Major Awards category in the ILEP, must have an associated workload of at least 60 ECTS (or equivalent) credits per academic year and be at least one full-time academic year in duration. Non-EEA students must attend the programme on a full-time, daytime, face-to-face basis, which is defined as students attending between the hours of 8am and 6pm on at least three days between Monday and Friday each week. Programme delivery must be predominantly through in-person classes to provide a high quality educational experience for students coming to Ireland, with the exception of instances where Government advice or public health restrictions require a move to wholly online delivery';

b) Internships/Placements

'Students enrolled on courses leading to major awards at Level 7 or above on the NFQ may undertake an internship/placement where this forms an integral part of an academic course listed in the ILEP, or an eligible programme offered by a provider with authorisation to use the TrustEd mark. It is the responsibility of the provider to ensure that the placements are appropriate to the nature and level of the academic programme and do not exceed 50% of the total duration of the course. Completion of the placement(s) must count for ECTS credits and

contribute to the final award achieved.

In considering the design of programmes, programme boards shall take account of these eligibility criteria for the admission of international students to TUS programmes during new programme development. Programmes that do not align with these criteria will not be eligible to admit international students.

8.11   Professional, Regulatory and Statutory Bodies (PRSBs)

Where a programme requires or aims to achieve PRSB accreditation, the requirements of the PRSB should be used to inform the design of the programme. If the programme is designed to meet the educational requirements of a regulated profession or recognised professional body this should be stated explicitly.

Where a programme requires regulatory body approval the requirements of the regulatory body are adopted in the design of the programme in a manner consistent with the applicable TUS Award Standard.

8.12   Collaborative Programmes

Collaborative programme provision refers to TUS as one of "two or more providers being involved by formal agreement in provision of a programme of higher education and training" (*QQI Policy for Collaborative Programmes, Transnational Programmes and Joint Awards (Revised 2012)*[7]

TUS engages with a broad range of partners developing collaborative provision opportunities both nationally and internationally. Additionally, TUS is committed to participation in the RUN-EU European University alliance and the associated development and of collaborative and joint programmes, offering a broad range of mobility opportunities for student and staff. The design of programmes with collaborative partners, including the design of collaborative programmes and joint awards must be informed by both this policy and the relevant TUS policies on collaborative and joint awards, including:

- *TUS Policy and Procedures for Collaborative Provision (National and Transnational);*
- *TUS Policy for Participation in the European Approach for the Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes;*
- *TUS Policy on Linked Provision and Linked Provider Framework.*

9.0   TUS Programme Validation Processes

The validation processes operated by TUS will ensure that its academic programmes are robustly and successfully validated, thereby achieving adherence to statutory requirements including:

1) the *Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act (*2012*)*[2]; and

2) the *QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (for all providers)* (2016) [33]. They also align with the European Standards and Guidelines (2015)[34] including the Standards; 1.2 Design and Approval of Programmes, 1.3 Student-centred Learning, Teaching and Assessment;   1.4 Student Admission, Progression, Recognition and Certification; 1.6 Learning Resources and Student Support; and 1.9 On-going Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes.

The following three distinct Validation Processes shall operate at TUS:

1. Validation and approval of New Programmes leading to Major Awards;

2. Validation of Programmes leading to Non-major Awards (Minor/Special Purpose/Supplemental Awards, and Microcredentials less than 10 ECTS (leading to Certificate of Completion).

3. Differential validation and approval based on a modification of an existing validated TUS Programme (See Section 10.0);

The detailed procedures associated with these Validation Processes are outlined in the TUS Programme Validation Procedures document accompanying this policy. This includes the composition of the associated validation panels.

A Programme Specification (Programme Document) shall be presented to the relevant validation panel for each programme, including each programme leading to an embedded award. The Programme Specification document specifies the particulars of a programme under a series of headings as outlined in Appendix 4.

10.0   Modification of a Programme Outside of Programmatic Review

Taught programmes and their constituent modules are continuously monitored and reviewed by Programme Boards. Modification to a programme and/or modules may be proposed as part of the overall approach to quality enhancement as a result of their ongoing monitoring and review activity. Changes to programmes and/or modules should not normally be proposed within 1 year following validation or periodic re-validation.

All proposed modification to programmes and/or modules should be notified to and discussed at the relevant Programme Board. All proposed modifications require the approval of the relevant Head of Department for submission to Academic Council.

All programme changes approved in a given academic year become operational at the beginning of the subsequent academic year.

Depending on the scale and scope of the proposed changes, modification to programmes can be categorised as:
a) Grade 1 Modifications: Programme Level Changes By Differential Validation;
b) Grade 2 Modifications: Major & Minor Change(s) to Programmes/Modules.

10.1   Grade 1 Modifications: Programme Level Changes By Differential Validation

Grade 1 modifications typically impact at the level of the programme and may impact the nature of the award which underpinned the previous validation decision or have substantial impact on the basis of the original validation. This includes modification to a programme, or an accumulation of modifications, which has a substantial impact on the entire programme in terms of programme learning outcomes, content, delivery, and/or assessment. Examples of such modifications requiring differential validation include:

1. inclusion of a New Embedded Major Award(s);

2. a change of the Award Type (Stem) (e.g. B.Sc. to B.Eng.);

3. significant change to directed learning hours;

4. introduction of a new delivery mode (e.g. part-time, blended, online)

5. change to the Programme Title (Specialisation) with change to the theme/disciplinary focus and/or substantial impact on programme learning outcomes

6. significant structural changes to Programmes with associated impact on the intended programme learning outcomes.

The following criteria shall apply to Grade 1, Programme Level Change(s):
a) all Major Programme Level Changes shall require Academic Council approval upon recommendation from the relevant subcommittee;

b) the approval of Major Programme Level Changes shall be by Differential Validation. Differential Validation involves the validation of a programme that is

based on the modification of an existing validated TUS Programme. The TUS validation of the original programme informs the validation of the derived programme;

c) a differential validation shall be conducted in accordance with the differential validation procedures outlined in the TUS Programme Validation and Modification Procedures document accompanying this policy.

It is noted that the accumulation of Grade 1 modifications to areas such as the programme title, substantive changes to theme or discipline focus and/or substantial structural changes may require full programme review or constitute the development of a new programme. Where applicable, such a decision is taken by the Faculty in consultation with the Vice President Academic Affairs and Registrar.

10.2   Grade 2 Modifications: Major & Minor Change(s) to Programmes/Modules

Grade 2 modifications include major and minor modification(s) to a programme and/or its constituent module(s) are change(s) which have impact on the content, delivery, or assessment of the programme and its modules to varying degrees depending on the context. Unlike Grade 1 modifications by differential validation, while Grade 2 modifications may be significant, there is no substantial impact at award or programme level including on the programme learning outcomes or basis of the original validation.

Examples of such changes include, *inter alia*:

1. a change in admissions, transfer and progression requirements;

2. change to Programme Title (Specialisation) with no substantial change to the discipline focus and no substantial impact on Programme Learning Outcomes;

3. module title changes;

4. amendments to the Module Short Title for clarity of transcripts.

5. module learning outcome changes;

6. teaching and learning and/or assessment strategy of programme or modules,

7. changes to indicative content of modules;

8. changes to the type and/or weighting of assessment

9. a change to the scheduling of modules within a stage or between stages;

10. a change to the prerequisite status of module(s),

11. the addition of, or changes to a special regulation,

12. a change to the allocation of ECTS within the approved programme schedule,

13. the introduction of a new module, previously validated by TUS, and consequent removal of a module;

14. the introduction of a new module, not previously validated by TUS, and consequent removal of a module;

15. the addition and/or removal of an elective module.

The following criteria shall apply to Grade 2 Modifications: Major & Minor Modification(s) to Programmes/Modules:

a) all minor changes shall be submitted to the relevant subcommittee of Academic Council for review and recommendation to Academic Council and shall require Academic Council approval;

b) they shall be proposed using the procedures for Grade 2 Modifications outlined in the *TUS Programme Validation and Modification Procedures* document accompanying this policy;

c) where the Grade 2 modification involves the addition of new module(s) that have not been previously validated, they shall be subject to desk review by an independent external academic prior to presentation to Academic Council for approval.

Changes to update the module learning resources (recommended reading and references) or to address typographical errors can be made at any time by the module author and do not require approval.

It is noted that if the accumulation of Grade 2 Modifications has substantial impact at programme level, a differential validation or full programme review may be required. Where applicable, such a decision is taken by the Faculty in consultation with the Vice President Academic Affairs and Registrar.

References

1. Technological Universities Act (2018)

2. Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act (2012)

3. National Framework of Qualifications

4. QQI Policy Restatement Policy and Criteria for Access, Transfer and Progression in Relation to Learners for Providers of Further and Higher Education and Training (2015)

5. TUS Procedures for Programme Validation and Modification. TUS Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook

6. TUS Academic QAE Handbook

7. TUS Policy and Procedures for Collaborative Provision (National and Transnational)

8. TUS Policy for Participation in the European approach for the QA of Joint Programmes

9. TUS Academic Regulations for Taught Programmes

10. TUS Policy for Exit Awards

11. TUS Policy and Procedures on Digital Badges

12. TUS Student Placement Policy

13. Putting Learning First: TUS Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy

14. TUS Graduate Attributes Framework

15. TUS Guide to Writing and Using Learning Outcomes. TUS Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook

16. TUS Compendium of Approaches to Internationalisation of the Home Curriculum.

17. TUS Compendium of Embedding Education for Sustainable Development in Teaching, Learning and Assessment

18. TUS Postgraduate Research Regulations

19. Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines developed by QQI for Designated Awarding Bodies (2016)

20. Joint-Sectoral Protocol between Designated Awarding Bodies and Quality and Qualifications Ireland for the Inclusion of Qualifications within the National Framework of Qualifications (2022)

21. Principles and Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of Credit in Irish Higher Education

22. European Credit Transfer and Accumulation Scheme

23. European Qualifications Framework (EQF)

24. QQI Policy and Criteria for Making Awards (2017)

25. TUS Policy on Recognition of Prior Learning

26. European approach to micro-credentials for lifelong learning and employability (2022/C 243/02)

27. TUS Strategic Plan

28. TUS Student Placement Policy

29. UNESCO 2020

30. UNESCO 2015

31. QQI Code of Practice for Provision of Education to International Learners

32. Interim List of Eligible Programme (ILEP)

33. QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (for all providers) (2016)

34. European Standards and Guidelines (2015)

Appendices

Appendix 1. Relevant Definitions

Programme

A programme refers to a higher education curriculum leading to an award (degree, diploma or other certificate). It has coordinated elements (Modules) which may be organised into Stage(s), depending on the programme type. Accordingly, programmes may be divided into stages and modules. The completion of a programme provides the student with a higher education qualification. The programme is characterised by its constituent modules, and the combination and sequence of modules, required to achieve the programme learning outcomes.

Module

A module is a discrete unit of study designed to be combined with other modules into one or more larger programme(s) and can be shared by different programmes. At TUS, all modules that are a constituent part of programmes leading to awards on the NFQ have a minimum volume of 5 ECTS credits, or whole multiples thereof.

ECTS

The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) is a standard means for comparing academic credits, i.e. the volume of learning based on the defined learning outcomes and their associated workload, for higher education across the EU and other collaborating European countries (ECTS Users' Guide. Publications Office of the European Union).

Stage

Staged programmes are organised into one or more stages, delineated by academic year or calendar year. A stage entails a prescribed number of ECTS credits to be completed by a student. Conceptually, a stage is a rung on a progression ladder and may comprise a set of modules at a similar level. Typically, the NFQ level of the intended learning outcomes of constituent modules increases as a learner progresses through successive stages of a programme.

Semester

Staged programmes are frequently organised in semesters. A semester is a period of time equal to half an academic year and typically corresponds to a 30 ECTS that extends to at least half an academic year.

Approved Programme Schedule

The Approved Programme Schedule (APS) defines the set of prescribed modules (together with their associated credits, contact hours, types of assessment and any special regulations) that make up a full programme of study. Each stage of a programme has a constituent APS.

Ab-initio Programme

An ab-initio programme is a Bachelor Degree (Level 7) or Honours Bachelor Degree (Level 8) that embeds stage progression, typically "from the beginning" (ab-initio).

Add-on Programme

An add-on programme is designed to provide students with an opportunity to continue on the ladder to a programme having completed a programme at Level 6 or Level 7 of the NFQ.

Programme Validation

Programme validation refers to the formal processes by which a programme is assessed and approved by TUS, in its role as a DAB, to ensure that it meets the required academic and quality standards to lead to an award of the NFQ or to lead to a TUS Certificate of Completion (in the case of Micro-credentials of less than 10 ECTS). TUS Academic Council is the approval body for all TUS programmes. The validation of the programme also results in the validation of each of its constituent modules.

Differential Validation

Differential Validation involves the validation of a programme that is based on the modification of an existing validated TUS Programme. The TUS validation of the original programme informs the validation of the derived programme.

Qualification

A qualification is a formal record awarded following a period of successful study or training. Qualifications recognise the knowledge and skills that have been achieved and can be practised by a learner. Legislation uses the term award rather than qualification and as a result, the terms qualification and award are often used interchangeably.

Award

An award is as an academic qualification (degree, diploma or other certificate), conferred in recognition of the successful completion of a higher education programme of study, either at the undergraduate or postgraduate level, and issued by a competent authority such as a designated awarding body. All awards conferred by TUS are recognised on the National Framework of Qualifications.

ECTS Credits

The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) emanated from the Bologna process in 2005 and is a credit system designed to facilitate the movement of students between different countries. ECTS, or credits, are based on the learning achievements and workload of a learning opportunity. Credits can then be accumulated to contribute to an award.

Designated Awarding Body

A Designated Awarding Body (DAB) is a body established by law with the authority to make awards and to whom the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act, 2012 applies.

Appendix 2. European Alignment of the NFQ

EQF Level	QF-EHEA (Bologna)	NFQ Level	NFQ Award Type
EQF Level 1		NFQ Level 1	Level 1 Certificate
		NFQ Level 2	Level 2 Certificate
EQF Level 2		NFQ Level 3	Level 3 Certificate
			Junior Certificate
EQF Level 3		NFQ Level 4	Level 4 Certificate
EQF Level 4		NFQ Level 5	Leaving Certificate
			Level 5 Certificate
			Level 5 Professional Award
EQF Level 5		NFQ Level 6	Advanced Certificate
	Short Cycle Higher Education		Higher Certificate
			Level 6 Professional Award
EQF Level 6	First Cycle Higher Education	NFQ Level 7	Ordinary Bachelor Degree
			Level 7 Professional Award
		NFQ Level 8	Honours Bachelor Degree
			Higher Diploma
			Level 8 Professional Award
EQF Level 7	Second Cycle Higher Education	NFQ Level 9	Post-Graduate Diploma
			Masters Degree
			Level 9 Professional Award
EQF Level 8	Third Cycle Higher Education	NFQ Level 10	Doctoral Degree
			Higher Doctorate

Appendix 3. TUS Award Standards Adopted from QQI

TUS has adopted the following award standards from QQI:

<u>Generic</u>
- [Generic Major Award Standards (NFQ Levels 6-10)](#)
- [Generic Standards for Minor, Special Purpose, Supplemental Award-Types](#)

<u>Professional</u>
- [Professional Awards at NFQ Levels](#)

<u>Disciplinary Award Standards</u>
- [QQI Award Standards - Accountancy (July 2014)](#)
- [QQI Award Standards – Architecture (July 2014)](#)
- [QQI Award Standards - Architectural Technology 2016](#)
- [QQI Award Standards - Art & Design (July 2014)](#)
- [QQI Award Standards – Business (July 2014)](#)
- [QQI Integrated Award Standards for Business (June 2024)](#)
- [QQI Award Standards - Computing (July 2014)](#)
- [QQI Award Standards – Counselling and Physiotherapy (May 2014)](#)
- [QQI Award Standards - Engineering (July 2014)](#)
- [QQI Award Standards – English Language (November 2018)](#)
- [QQI Award Standards – For Pre-higher Education Foundation Awards for International Students (December 2015)](#)
- [QQI Award Standards – Award Standards - Nursing and Midwifery (July 2014)](#)
- [QQI Award Standards – Professional Master of Education (PME) Award (May 2014)](#)
- [QQI Award Standards - for Honours Bachelor of Laws and Master of Laws (July 2014)](#)
- [QQI Award Standards - Science (July 2014)](#)
- [QQI Award Standards - Social Care Work (July 2014)](#)

<u>Additional Award Standard Approved by Academic Council</u>

- [TUS Fine Art Award Standard](#)

Appendix 4. Programme Document Specification

<u>Note</u>: The Programme Specification Document shall comprise a single document built on, and extracted from, Module Manager as a pdf, with heading as follows:

1. Programme Summary Information (Award Class, Type, Title, ECTS, NFQ Level, ISCED Classification)
2. Introduction to the Programme
   a) Programme Description
   a) Programme Aim
3. Alignment of Programme with TUS Strategy
4. Alignment of Programme with Faculty/Department Strategy
5. Rationale for the Programme
6. Programme Resources
   a) Staffing Resources
   b) Facilities Required
   c) Learning Resources
7. Industry/Sectoral Demand for the Programme
   a) Market Research and Consultation
   b) Employment Opportunities/Career Prospects of Graduates
8. Student Demand for the Programme
   a) Market Research and Consultation
   b) Projected Student Numbers
9. Access, Transfer and Progression
   a) Entry Requirement and Access Routes
   b) Transfer Routes
   c) Programme Progression
   d) Embedded Programmes
10. Teaching and Learning Strategy including Graduate Attributes
11. Assessment Strategy
12. Learning Supports
13. Programme Learning Outcomes
14. Programme Learning Outcomes Mapped to TUS Award Standards
15. Modules Mapped to Programme Learning Outcomes
16. Approved Programme Schedule
17. Programme Delivery Schedule
18. Detailed Assessment Matrix
19. Modules