

New Programme (Major Award) External Validation Report

Section A

Report of the External Review Panel

Programme Reference Number:	49
Faculty/School(s):	Science
Department(s):	Sport Exercise and Nutrition

Details of Programme(s) Reviewed

Title:	MSc in Digital Innovation for Sport
Type of Award:	Masters Degree
NFQ (National Framework of Qualifications) Level:	9
ECTS:	90
ISCED:	1014
Duration:	3 Semesters
Proposed Student Intake:	16
Proposed Start Date:	Sep. 2024
Delivery Mode(s):	Online, Blended

Title:	Postgraduate Diploma in Science in Digital Innovation for Sport
Type of Award:	Post Graduate Diploma
NFQ Level:	9
ECTS:	60
ISCED:	1014
Duration:	2 Semesters
Proposed Student Intake:	16
Proposed Start Date:	Sep. 2024
Delivery Mode(s):	Online, Blended

Title:	Certificate in Digital Marketing and Emerging Technology in Sport
Type of Award:	Certificate
NFQ Level:	9
ECTS:	15

ISCED:	1014
Duration:	1 Semester
Proposed Student Intake:	16
Proposed Start Date:	Sep. 2024
Delivery Mode(s):	Online, Blended

Title:	Certificate in Digital Transformation for Sport
Type of Award:	Certificate
NFQ Level:	9
ECTS:	15
ISCED:	1014
Duration:	1 Semester
Proposed Student Intake:	16
Proposed Start Date:	Sep. 2024
Delivery Mode(s):	Online, Blended

Title:	Certificate in Learning Design for Sports Performance Feedback
Type of Award:	Certificate
NFQ Level:	9
ECTS:	15
ISCED:	1014
Duration:	1 Semester
Proposed Student Intake:	16
Proposed Start Date:	Sep. 2024
Delivery Mode(s):	Online, Blended

Title:	Certificate in Programming for Sports Innovation
Type of Award:	Certificate
NFQ Level:	9
ECTS:	15
ISCED:	1014
Duration:	1 Semester
Proposed Student Intake:	16
Proposed Start Date:	Sep. 2024
Delivery Mode(s):	Online, Blended

Title:	Certificate in Sports Data Analytics
Type of Award:	Certificate
NFQ Level:	9
ECTS:	15
ISCED:	1014

Duration:	1 Semester
Proposed Student Intake:	16
Proposed Start Date:	Sep. 2024
Delivery Mode(s):	Online, Blended

Date of Review:	15 th May 2024
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Review Panel

Panellist Role	Title	Name	Organisation	Job Title
Chair	Dr	Paul O Leary	SETU	Head of Quality Promotion and Policy Development
External Academic Discipline Expert	Dr	Damien Young	TUS	Lecturer in Sports Coaching and Performance Analysis
External Academic Discipline Expert	Dr	John Francis	Worcester University	Senior Lecturer in Performance Analysis
Industry/ Community Representative	Ms	Grainne Barry	Stats Perform	Senior VP of Operations
Student Representative	Ms	Aoife Gallagher	ATU, Donegal	Research Student
Vice President for Academic Affairs and Registrar (VPAAR) Nominee (Academic Secretary)	Dr	Aodhmar Cadogan	ATU, Sligo	Secretary to Panel/Assistant Registrar
Recording Secretary	Ms	Gemma Cronin	ATU Sligo	Quality Assurance Compliance

All external members of the panel have declared that they are independent of ATU (Atlantic Technological University), and all have declared that they have no conflict of interest.

Programme Design Team

The panel met the staff listed below during the review process.

Dr Denise Martin	Team Lead for Programme Development, ATU Galway
Dr Damien Costello	Head of Department of Sport Exercise and Nutrition, ATU Galway
Dr Lisa Ryan	Head of School of Science and Computing, ATU Galway
Maria Faulkner	Lecturer ATU Donegal
Ronan Doherty	Lecturer ATU Donegal
Mr Pdraig McGourty	Lecturer ATU Sligo
Dr Martin O'Neill	Lecturer ATU Sligo
Dr Kevin Craddock	Lecturer ATU Sligo
Noreen Henry	Lecturer ATU Mayo
Dr Robert Mooney	Lecturer ATU Galway

Dr Alan Kelly	Lecturer ATU Donegal

Introduction

Digital innovation can be defined as the development of novel digital technological products or solutions or the innovative use of existing digital technologies. Digital Innovation is critical to the growth and development of the sports industry as these initiatives can optimize processes, improve stakeholder experiences, and deliver new revenue streams. It is the Digital Innovators with digital mindsets who are driving digital transformation within sport.

The course has been co-designed by staff from four ATU campuses with sports science, computer programming, data science, digital business and marketing backgrounds. We believe that this cross-disciplinary approach has resulted in a programme which will produce well-rounded, innovative graduates who have the flexibility and digital skills to affect positive change on the sporting landscape.

Rationale for Programme(s)

As the global sports industry continues to grow, the demand for sports graduates with the digital, data and innovation skillset to support digital transformation and growth is increasing. Ireland is home to ten of the leading global SportsTech companies including Peloton, Fitbit, StatsPerform, Stats Sports and Orreco, along with 80+ indigenous SportsTech startups. This sector has repeatedly called for digital skills development pathways to engage employees, drive retention and attract new talent to the industry (SportsTech Ireland / EY Report, 2024). The need for sport specific digital skills development programmes is echoed in the 68 National Governing Bodies, the 29 Local Sports Partnerships and other agencies who run sport in Ireland. Sport Ireland have stated their strategic priorities are to build innovation, drive collaboration across the sector and promote a digital first approach.

The desk-based research conducted supports the general continued need to develop graduates with high level digital skills (Technology Ireland Strategy 2022-26; Digital Economy and Society Index Report 2022; Digital Ireland Framework 2022; Technology Skills Ireland 2022). Recent reports and strategy documents highlight the demand for digital upskilling in the sports domain, in particular (Sport Ireland Strategy 2023; GAA Strategic Plan 2026; FAI Strategy 2022-2025; IRFU Strategic Plan 2023; IDA SportsTech Info 2021). The proposed programmes will serve the national objective of producing 65% of graduates with high-level ICT skills, particularly in AI and analytics by 2030 (Digital Economy and Society Index Report, 2022).

A needs analysis of the sports sector highlights the demand for a graduate pathway into the digital dimension of sport, complimented with short courses, flexible learning options and stackable credits, suitable for professional earner-learner students. The proposed suite of programmes is designed to meet these needs by offering a full time Master of Science in Digital Innovation for Sport with specialisms in programming for sport innovation, learning design for sports performance feedback, and digital marketing and emerging technology for sport. Our extensive undergraduate research reveals strong demand for programmes of this nature, and this would be the first 'sportstech' Masters in the Irish HEI landscape.

In order to cater to the significant need for professional learners, smaller awards are embedded within the Master Programme and will be validated as five standalone 15 credit Level 9 Certificates in Sports Data and Analytics, Digital Transformation in Sport, Digital Marketing and Emerging Technology in Sport, Programming for Sports Innovation, and Learning Design for Sports Performance Feedback. In regard to the existing market, TU Dublin have launched a 60 Credit Post-Graduate Diploma in Sports Analytics, Technology and Innovation aimed at professionals with more than five years' industry experience in April 2024, however there are no similar awards offered without the mandated five years experience. Small, stackable micro-credentials have made a significant contribution to digital upskilling in Ireland, but there are little or no offerings in the sport domain (N-TUTORR Micro-credentials Report 2023). The proposed sport specific programmes will meet this market deficit.

Validation Criteria

ATU's Developing and Validating New Taught Programmes Policy specifies that new programmes must comply with the following criteria for validation:

1. The programme aims and learning outcomes are clear and aligned with the proposed award title.
2. The rationale for the programme is well informed and justified.
3. The design of the programme is suitably structured and fit for purpose.
4. The design of the programme ensures that students can successfully achieve the Programme Learning Outcomes.
5. The teaching, learning and assessment strategy is well planned and appropriate for the discipline area and type of award.
6. Assessment techniques are fair, valid, reliable, consistent and a credible measure of the academic standard attained by students.
7. The planned resources, including staff, physical, online, library and student supports, sufficiently support the teaching, learning and assessment strategy for the programme.
8. The programme facilitates lifelong learning for a diverse student population by setting out appropriate entry requirements and opportunities for access, transfer, and progression.
9. There is demand for potential graduates from the programme.
10. The learning environment and mode of delivery are consistent with the needs of the intended students of the programme and accessible and appropriate support services for students have been provided for.
11. Students will be well informed on the requirements of the programme, guided to relevant resources and supported in their studies in a caring environment.

The Panel is satisfied that the proposed programme(s) meet ATU's validation criteria subject to meeting the conditions outlined below. They are satisfied that there is a strong rationale and need for the programme and that the delivery of the programme and the support to student has been considered and planned for. They have also outlined a number of recommendations which will enhance the programme(s)

Findings

Overall Finding

Validated without changes	
Validated subject to condition(s) and/or recommendation(s)	X
Rejected	

Reason for Overall Finding

Overall, the Panel is supportive of what they consider to be a very strong programme proposal. The Panel consider that the programme concept is valid; that the rationale for the programme is solidly grounded and well-researched; that there will be a demand for the programme and for its graduates; that the programme will meet genuine education and skills need; that the programme is highly relevant in the contemporary Sports Tech industry and it will be a valuable contribution to the enhancement of the capacity and skills shortages in the area of Sports Tech and digitisation.

The Panel recommend recommended approval of the proposed programme to Academic Council subject to the conditions and recommendations outlined below.

Commendations

The Validation Panel advises Academic Council of the following commendations.

1. The focus on Digital transformation and digital innovation as the foundation for the programme.
2. The significant collaboration that is evident in the programme team and the benefit and synergies that this brings to the proposed programme but also the benefit that the new programmes will bring to complement and enhance the existing programmes.
3. The approach of the team to embrace generative AI as a core feature of the programme and encouraging the student to be early adopter of the technology.
4. The high quality of the submission documentation provided.
5. The approach to the learning, i.e. learning in action and the integration of practical and real work applications throughout.
6. The flexibility of the programme structure and the option to complete certificates, a postgraduate diploma and /or a Master of Science award.

Conditions

The Validation Panel advises Academic Council that subject to satisfying any condition(s) detailed below, the panel is satisfied that the proposed programme(s) meets the validation criteria as set out in Atlantic Technological University's Developing and Validating New Programmes Policy.

1. Revise the programme learning outcomes(PLO) for the postgraduate diploma, in particular, against the masters programme to ensure there is a clear differentiation between the two programmes in terms of the number and description of the PLOs.
2. Review the quantity of assessments across the two major awards, relative to the credit weighting of the module with a view to reducing the number of assessment components.
3. Revise where necessary all modules to ensure that all learning outcomes are assessed a minimum of once in each module. For example SPOR09015 Leading Digital Transformation in Sport, learning outcome 3 is not assessed, SPOR09003 Digital Marketing and Engagement for sport learning outcome 5 not assessed, SPOR09011 Data Architecture and Programming for Complex Sports Systems learning outcome 1,2 are not assessed.
4. Review the English language requirements and the statement regarding the currency of the test i.e. (within 2 year requirement). Entry requirement of H2.1 to be amended to H2.2 on page 12 and also review text in other embedded programme entry requirements sections.

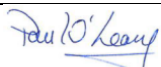
Recommendations

The panel advises Academic Council that the Programme Development Team and/or the Department should take cognisance of any recommendations outlined below.

1. Ensure there is consistency in the formatting and presentation of the layout of the learning outcomes and the text in the indicative syllabus in all modules.
2. Revise the use of wording 'Open Book Exam' to Coursework Exam or In-class test (or similar) at the end of the semester in module SPOR09002 Data Analysis for sports intelligence, SPOR09011 Data Architecture and Programming for Complex Sports Systems.
3. Review Learning Outcome 1 and Learning Outcome 2 in Biol09021Research Methods, to ensure that the terminology is more appropriate and targeted to Sports Tech and not tied to the 'human nutrition, health or sport/exercise science'. Include other potential formats for the project other than the journal format indicated. Revise the terminology for the specified journal to 'relevant journal in the area'.
4. Consider reducing the maximum amount of learning outcomes in modules SPOR09001 Sport Analytics and AI for Sport and BIOL09048 Research Methods to the recommended 3-5 outcomes per 5 ECTS.
5. Consider Integrating or introducing some aspect of digital mindset or business / entrepreneurship into a part of a module.
6. The marketing material should clearly set out the plan for outreach/sports facilities visits and the potential costs to be carried by the student for such activities.

Report Approval

This report has been agreed by the review panel and is signed on their behalf by the chairperson.

Signed:	
Name Validation Panel Chair	Dr Paul O'Leary Date: 22/05/2024