New Programme Validation

(Minor/SPA/Supplemental Award)

Section A

Report of the External Review Panel

Programme Reference Number:	S009
Faculty/School(s):	Business
Department(s):	Law, Public Service and Education

Details of Programme(s) Reviewed

Title:	Certificate in Personal and Vocational Development
Type of Award:	Special Purpose Award
NFQ	6
ECTS:	60
ISCED:	0031
Duration:	2 years
Proposed Student Intake:	20
Proposed Start Date:	September 2024
Delivery Mode(s):	Part Time

Title:	Certificate in Life Skills and Vocational Development
Type of Award:	Special Purpose Award
NFQ	6
ECTS:	40
ISCED:	0031
Duration:	2 years
Proposed Student Intake:	20
Proposed Start Date:	September 2024
Delivery Mode(s):	Part Time

Title:	Certificate in Life Skills and Social Development
Type of Award:	Special Purpose Award
NFQ	6
ECTS:	20
ISCED:	0031
Duration:	1 year
Proposed Student Intake:	20
Proposed Start Date:	September 2024
Delivery Mode(s):	Part Time

Date of Review:	28 May 2024

Review Panel

Panellist Role	Name	Job Title
Chair	Seamus Lennon	Head of School, ATU
External Academic Discipline Expert*	Nicola Maxwell	UCC ID plus programme
Industry/ Community Representative*	Amanda Corbett	Brothers of Charity
Academic/Head of Department		
Student Representative	N/A	
Academic Secretary	Simon Stephens	Assistant Registrar
Recording Secretary	N/A	

*One or two external members of panel in total.

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.

- Brónagh Heverin, Head of Department Law, Public Service and Education
- Jennette Kilroy, Lecturer, Universal Design for Learning (Path 4)
- Nicola Dunnion, Head of Department of Tourism and Sport
- Michael Gill, Head of Department of Organisational Development
- Brian McGonagle, Access and Participation Officer

Introduction

The proposed programmes are bespoke programmes designed specifically for students with intellectual disabilities as a result of the Higher Education Authority Path 4 funding. Through Path 4 funding, students with intellectual disabilities (ID) who are typically not included in higher education, will be given an opportunity to attend ATU and complete a special purpose award designed to meet their academic, vocational, and personal development needs. In addition to the primary 60 ECT Certificate in Personal and Vocational Development, there are 2 exit awards namely the Certificate in Life Skills and Social Development (20 ECTS) and the Certificate in Life Skills and Vocational Development (40 ECTS).

Rationale for Programme(s)

Currently, there are no university programmes designed for students with ID in the West or Northwest regions of Ireland. There is a strong demand for such a programme in the regions served by ATU. This programme will meet the needs of the target student population by providing an opportunity to build vocational and academic skills, experience university life and develop connections for career goals, and pursue the study of desired subjects. This benefits the wider university community and the region by demonstrating that people with intellectual disabilities belong in all spaces and are deserving of dignity and social inclusion.

The proposed programme is funded through the Higher Education Authority, Path 4 initiative, which looks to expand third level options to students with intellectual disabilities. Through a competitive proposal process, ATU was awarded full funding to implement a programme to address the academic needs of individuals with intellectual disabilities across the geographical region served by ATU. In preparation for the Path 4 proposal, 8 focus group sessions were conducted with students with intellectual disabilities with a total of 64 participants. Questions were posed to determine interest in a third level programme and to identify the academic support required. Individuals reflected on the importance of attending college and shared their future ambitions. 76% of participants were interested in attending a programme at ATU. Participants wanted a programme that offers the chance to learn employment skills, grow in independence, and offers an academic choice. In preparation for this programme, an advisory group was formed which consisted of staff members from across ATU, community representatives (HSE, NLN, Brothers of Charity, Down Syndrome Donegal) and business leaders, as well as representatives from Trinity College Centre for Students with Intellectual Disabilities. Each individual provided significant input into the development of this programme. The proposed programme reflects the needs of both individuals with intellectual disabilities and the needs of employers.

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. Yes.
2. The rationale for the programme is well informed and justified. Yes.
3. The design of the programme is suitably structured and fit for purpose. Yes.
4. The design of the programme ensures that students can successfully achieve the Programme Learning Outcomes. Yes.
5. The teaching, learning and assessment strategy is well planned and appropriate for the discipline area and type of award. Yes.
6. Assessment techniques are fair, valid, reliable, consistent and a credible measure of the academic standard attained by students. Yes.
7. The planned resources, including staff, physical, online, library and student supports, sufficiently support the teaching, learning and assessment strategy for the programme. Yes.
8. The programme facilitates lifelong learning for a diverse student population by setting out appropriate entry requirements and opportunities for access, transfer, and progression. Yes.
9. There is demand for potential graduates from the programme. Yes.
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. Yes.
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. Yes.

Findings

Overall Finding

Validated without changes	
Validated subject to recommendation(s)	**YES**
Rejected	

Reason for Overall Finding

Excellent documentation and in-panel presentation which provided a clear context and rationale for the proposed changes. The PDT have incredible passion to make this programme a success.

Commendations

The Validation Panel advises Academic Council of the following commendations.

- The PDT are commended for developing a programme that rightly recognises an underrepresented cohort of learners.

- The PDT are commended on the innovative nature of the programme which will make a significant contribution to the educational experiences of students and the educational environment at ATU.

- The PDT are commended for the rigour of the programme and its inclusive ethos through a staged and progressive delivery model that will maximise individual capacity for learning and success.

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.
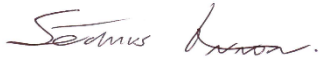
N/A

Recommendations

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

1. Provide a detailed description of the role and responsibilities of the *Educational Support Workers*. Don't include an SNA qualification as an essential requirement. This should be included as appendix.

2. Add additional detail on the process for provision and assessment of *Documented Evidence* of an ID.

3. The overall aim of "Increased student independence and self-determination" should be surfaced in the MLOs, specifically in *ACCSHU601 An Introduction to Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)*.

4. Provide additional details on the composition of the interview panel for admission.

5. In addition to reading lists provide additional/alternative learning resources. Include additional text in the TLA strategy.

6. Provide ensure that assessment is multi-modal. Include additional text in the TLA strategy.

7. Provide additional details on the peer-peer learning opportunities that will occur during the programme. Include additional text in the TLA strategy.

8. Ensure that a staff training plan is developed during semester 1 of year 1. The plan should be developed through engagement with student support staff, existing focus group participants and new learners. Training should be provided in semester 2 of year 1.

9. Conduct an annual, in-depth review that facilitates appropriate reflection on the student success and staff-student interaction.

Report Approval

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

Seamus Lennon   **28.05.2024**

Validation Panel Chair