

New Programme (Major Award) External Validation Report

Section A

Report of the External Review Panel

Programme Reference Number:	
Faculty/School(s):	Faculty of Science (Sligo), Faculty of Science and Health (Donegal), School of Science and Computing (Galway)
Department(s):	Life Sciences (Sligo), Life and Physical Sciences (Donegal) Biopharmaceutical and Medical Science (Galway)

Details of Programme(s) Reviewed

Title:	Bachelor of Science in Industrial Laboratory Science with named awards in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bachelor of Science in Industrial Laboratory Science (Biopharmaceutical Science) • Bachelor of Science in Industrial Laboratory Science (Biochemistry) • Bachelor of Science in Industrial Laboratory Science (Life Sciences)
Type of Award:	Major
NFQ (National Framework of Qualifications) Level:	7
ECTS:	180
ISCED:	0510
Duration:	3 years
Proposed Student Intake:	30
Proposed Start Date:	September 2023
Delivery Mode(s):	Full-time blended

Title:	Higher Certificate in Science with named awards in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher Certificate in Science in Industrial Laboratory Science (Biopharmaceutical Science) • Higher Certificate in Science in Industrial Laboratory Science (Biochemistry) • Higher Certificate in Science in Industrial Laboratory Science (Life Sciences)
Type of Award:	Major

NFQ Level:	6
ECTS:	120
ISCED:	0510
Duration:	2
Proposed Student Intake:	30
Proposed Start Date:	September 2023
Delivery Mode(s):	Full-time blended

Title:	Certificate in Science
Type of Award:	Minor
NFQ Level:	6
ECTS:	60
ISCED:	0510
Duration:	1
Proposed Student Intake:	30
Proposed Start Date:	September 2023
Delivery Mode(s):	Full-time blended

Date of Review:	01 June 2023
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Review Panel

Panellist Role	Title	Name	Organisation	Job Title
Chair	Dr	Michael Hall	MTU	Head of School of Health and Social Sciences
External Academic Discipline Expert	Prof	Aine McKillop	Ulster University	Associate Dean (Academic Quality and Student Experience) School of Biomedical Sciences. Full Professor, Faculty of Life & Health Science.
External Academic Discipline Expert	Prof	Stephen McClean	Ulster University	Professor of Bioscience Education, School of Biomedical Sciences. Full Professor, Faculty of Life & Health Science.
Industry/ Community Representative	Ms	Brenda Murray	Phibro Animal Health	Quality Assurance Manager
Student Representative	Mr	Paul Agni	ATU	Postgraduate Student
Vice President for Academic Affairs and Registrar (VPAAR) Nominee (Academic Secretary)	Ms	Carmel Brennan	ATU	Assistant Registrar

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.

Jerry Bird	Neville McClenaghan
Eugene McCarthy	Kim McFadden
Anne Carney	Colin Fowley
David Doyle	Deirdre McColgan
Eileen Armstrong	Elizabeth Carroll
Ioannis Manolakis	Jacinta Ryan
John Barrett	Margaret McAndrew
Margaret Doherty	Mary Hannon
Mary Carr	Tom Patton
Michael Murphy	Oliver Joyce
Olga O'Mahony	Padraig McDonagh
Orla Slattery	Seamus O'Donnell
Sarah Best	Sinead Morgan
Sheila Faherty	Thomas Flanagan
Teresa Hanley	Yvonne Lang

Introduction

In late 2022, Minister Simon Harris announced a new national Tertiary Education initiative whereby school-leavers, and others, may start their degree studies in a Further Education (FE) college and complete the programme in a third-level institution. The BSc in Industrial Laboratory Science programme has been developed as part of the first phase of this new initiative. All entrants to the BSc in Industrial Laboratory Science will commence their studies anchored in one of three Education and Training Board (ETB) sites undertaking a common first year of study, and on successful completion of Year 1 they will transfer to complete their studies following one of three distinct pathways anchored at one of three ATU sites.

Students electing to pursue the pathway offered in ATU Donegal (Letterkenny Campus) will be following the two-year "Biopharmaceutical Science" pathway. Students electing to pursue the pathway offered in ATU Galway-Mayo (Galway City Dublin Road Campus) will be following the two-year "Biochemistry" pathway. Students electing to pursue the pathway offered in ATU Sligo (Sligo Campus) will be following the two-year "Life Sciences" pathway. The elected pathway is reflected in the title of the named Higher Certificate and BSc awards.

See Appendix for Entry Requirements, Programme Learning Outcomes and Approved Programme Schedule.

Rationale for Programme(s)

This new BSc Industrial Laboratory Science programme has been developed in response to a new national initiative announced by Minister Harris late 2022. Through students entering an ETB partner site, this new programme paradigm which lies outside the traditional CAO entry mechanism,

represents a new addition to an already strong suite of Level 6, Level 7, Level 8, and Level 9 programmes in related professional disciplines.

As per the information at the launch of this initiative, this particular programme is one of many where the pathway to access this programme will mirror the existing, interview-based FE applications process which does not involve CAO points, noting students may use Post-Leaving Cert Courses (PLCs) in FE colleges as a stepping stone to a degree, but they must complete the PLC and then compete for reserved places.

The rationale and merits of this new programme also directly align with Ireland's National Skills Strategy published in June 2021 (see <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/69fd2-irelands-national-skills-strategy-2025-irelands-future/>), addressing principal objectives including: "A focus on providing skills development opportunities that are relevant to the needs of learners, society and the economy"; "Constant improvement and evaluation of teaching and learning quality at all stages of education"; "More people across Ireland engaging in lifelong learning"; "A focus on active inclusion, to support participation in education and training and the labour market"; "Support for an increase in the supply of skills to the labour market".

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.

Findings

Overall Finding

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

Reason for Overall Finding

Having reviewed the documentation provided and met with the Programme Development Team, the panel concludes that the programmes listed are fit for purpose and comply with the validation criteria stipulated.

Commendations

1. This new programme type is innovative, and the team is to be commended for progressing this proposal.
2. The team are commended on the collaborative and collegial approach to programme development.
3. The documentation provided to the panel was very clear and comprehensive.
4. The panel commends the commitment and passion exhibited during the validation panel meeting by the Programme Development Team.
5. The programme design and the development of content through the programme is commended.
6. The comprehensive approach to student support from stage one upwards by the joint ETBs and ATU team is commended. This is reflected in the flexible pathways being provided to students.

Conditions

1. Ensure that there is a consortium agreement in place establishing the nature, objectives, policies and scope of the collaborative provision, the governance framework for the partnership, and the quality assurance framework within which programme-level arrangements will apply. It should include specification of the roles and responsibilities of each party for programme provision and quality assurance and the policies and procedures which apply.
2. Ensure students are well informed about each stream and the differences between them.
3. Review the Programme Learning Outcome relating to professional behaviour to ensure that it reflects the learning of students who undertake a work placement and those who do not.
4. Clarify in the documentation the student supports that are available to students in stage one of the programme.

Recommendations

1. Review the assessment strategy for stage one of the programme and the individual modules therein with a view to reducing the number of assessments allowing students more time to transition to tertiary education, assimilate the programme content and benefit from assessment feedback.
2. Consider delivery options to aid the transition of first year students to support student learning and the assessment strategy e.g., yearlong delivery of the first stage of the programme.
3. Review required module reading lists to ensure that the volume is appropriate in all instances.
4. Review grading method for modules to ensure that they are appropriately recorded in module descriptors.
5. Given the constraints of utilising modules from existing programmes in the programme design, the Programme Board should avail of the next Programmatic Review need to align module descriptor content with the needs of all shared programmes and industry needs.
6. During the first delivery of this programme ensure that student and staff feedback is regularly sought and reviewed, with revisions made as required. Programme Boards should meet more than stipulated in the minimum requirement to ensure that issues are identified and reacted to promptly.
7. The Job Readiness module is a strong industry focussed module and should be used to support students in becoming familiar with the diverse range of roles and jobs available. This should be explicitly included in the module descriptor.
8. If it is considered that the programme title is somewhat limiting in relation to the roles that students can gain employment in, further clarification can be included in the programme marketing material.

Report Approval

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

Signed: Name: Dr Michael Hall Validation Panel Chair	Date
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