

## New Programme Validation External Review Panel Report

<b>Programme Reference Number:</b>	24
<b>Faculty/School(s):</b>	School of Design and Creative Arts
<b>Department(s):</b>	Department of Creative Education
<b>Type of Review:</b>	External Panel

### Details of Programme(s) Reviewed:

Title:	Award Type:	NFQ Level:	ECTS:	Duration:	Delivery Mode:	Proposed Student Intake:	Proposed Start Date:
MA in Education Practice	Structured Masters	9	90	2 years	Online	12	2025
Postgraduate Certificate in Education Practice	PG Cert	9	30	1 Year	Online	12	2025

<b>Date of Review:</b>	31 January 2025
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### Review Panel

Panellist Role	Title	Name	Organisation	Job Title
Chair	Dr	Michael Ryan	N/A	Retired Senior Lecturer and Senior Academic Developer, Technological University of the Shannon
External Academic Discipline Expert	Mr	Juha Lahtinen	Tampere University of Applied Sciences (TAMK)	Head of Competence Area Pedagogical Innovations and Culture
External Academic Discipline Expert	Dr	Angela Rickard	Maynooth University	Lecturer/Assistant Professor
Industry/ Community Representative	Mr	Kieran McTaggart	Donegal Education Support Centre	Director
Student Representative	Mr	Aili Usama	ATU	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.

Dr Patrick Tobin	Dr Dermot O'Donovan
Kevin Maye	Dr Pauline Logue
Thomas Shepherd	Eugene Flynn
Dr Marie English	John Langan
Maria Moore	John McGuinness

## Introduction

The programme is aimed at qualified teachers (primarily post-primary professional teachers) who wish to pursue a Level 9 qualification and develop and enhance their teaching, through research, practice and reflexivity. It is aligned with the Teaching Council (Ireland) Initial Teacher Education Policy Statement (2023). The programme is designed to enable practising teachers to achieve a Masters award by undertaking a 2-year part-time programme. Learners will apply their learning in their classrooms and use those classrooms as a site of their practitioner research, adopting an action research methodology. The programme will be delivered online with taught elements (30 ECTS) and research elements (60 ECTS).

The programme is designed to provide learners with a pathway towards a Level 9 qualification whilst giving them the opportunity to:

- further develop their professional practice in the context of the continuum of professional life-long learning
- deepen their integration of education theory and research within their practice
- enhance their proficiency with educational and critical assessment of technology
- develop mentoring and tutoring skills to support both newly qualified teachers and school placement students.
- develop leadership and management skills
- develop a comprehensive digital portfolio, incorporating evidence of creative innovation and technological practices
- critically analyse policy developments and debates in the context of the post-primary educational landscape, nationally and internationally.
- effectively implement Universal Design for Learning, and inclusivity strategies in practice
- creatively promote global citizenship education.

The programme is designed in a modular format using an online delivery mode (incorporating online live and recorded lectures, online live tutorials, community of practice with flipped classrooms).

## Rationale for Programme(s)

Since the establishment of the Teaching Council in 2006, and in particular since the publication of Review of Initial Teacher Education Provision in Ireland (the 'Sahlberg Report') in 2013, there has been a focus on the importance of research within the sphere of teacher education. The Sahlberg Report emphasised the importance of initial teacher education (ITE) provision being research-based, research-informed and research-led. The Teaching Council's Cosán - Framework for Teachers' Learning (2016) policy document cites research from Wei, Darling-Hammond, et al., (2009) highlighting the importance and relevance of research for enhancing a teachers' practice:

An extensive research literature shows that professional development is most effective in improving teachers' instructional practice and contributing to student learning when it is continuous and sustained, and closely

connected to the work of teachers in the classroom, when it fosters teacher professional collaboration, and when it coherently relates to broader school reform efforts. This programme specifically meets the needs outlined in the Teaching Council's Cosán - Framework for Teachers' Learning (2016) policy document by :

- providing rich and relevant learning opportunities
- prioritising learning that benefits participants and their pupils
- outlining a flexible framework for learners
- facilitating continuous professional development and life-long learning opportunities.

Furthermore, the programme is designed to promote learning that is:

- personal and professional
- collaborative and individual
- school-based and external.
- both classroom-based and digital

William (2014) highlights the role that educational research plays in guiding teachers towards practices that can have the most impact in the classroom. The programme is designed with a practitioner research model, allowing teachers to understand the way in which their practice can be improved through reflexivity - empirical evidence and reflection. In this sense, the teachers are expected to embrace a philosophy of Teacher Professional Learning (TPL) and life-long learning, continuing to develop skills, knowledge and pedagogies appropriate to the ever-changing educational landscape. According to Manfra (2019) due to the complex and situated nature of teaching, the participation of teachers in education research is warranted and offers teachers the opportunity to access their own power and improve teaching practice.

The Programme Development Team conducted extensive secondary and primary research which identified a need for this programme. The main reasons cited for interest in this offering were career progression, continuous professional development, training in new technologies, training in new teaching methodologies, and preparation for future potential management positions.

## 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)	<b>X</b>
Rejected	

### Reason for Overall Finding

Having reviewed the documentation provided and engaged in discussion with the Programme Development Team the panel are of the view that the programme is necessary, well thought out and of an appropriate standard. As such the programme is approved subject to the condition and recommendations outlined.

### Commendations

The Validation Panel advises Academic Council of the following commendations.

1. The panel welcomed the development of this programme as it provides a progression opportunity for graduates of initial training in education programmes, thereby opening up new career opportunities for them and addressing a discrepancy for graduates with level 8 degrees in Education.
2. There is a strong rationale for the programme, and evidence of a target market.
3. The basis of the programme on Teaching Council's Cosán - Framework for Teachers' Learning (2016) policy document is appropriate and positive.
4. The panel commended the quality of the documentation provided which was comprehensive.
5. The skillset, values and practice experience of the proposing team came across strongly in the meeting with the panel.

### 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. As currently written, the 'Thesis in Education Practice' module does not sufficiently reflect the intended practitioner research focus in its learning outcomes and indicative content. Ensure that the action research nature of the research is highlighted in module learning outcomes, indicative content and relevant resources. The inclusion of practitioner research should also be promoted as a key selling point of the programme.

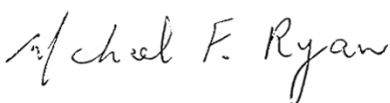
## Recommendations

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

1. Ensure that the programme's learning outcomes explicitly reflect the intent of the programme as clarified in discussions with the panel. Specifically, both the reflective nature of the programme and the coverage of the philosophy, psychology and sociology of education should be enhanced in the programme learning outcomes.
2. Consider delivering an in-person induction to assist with establishing a learning community, building trust and enhancing students' online collaboration throughout the programme. Alternatively, or additionally, an on-site session may be considered useful at a later stage of the programme delivery in support of specific assessment elements.
3. The assessment strategy for the programme and for individual modules should be reviewed ensuring that students are not over assessed and that assessments are included which scaffold students in the writing skills required for their thesis. Consider, for example, offering students the option to undertake an initial 'reconnaissance' stage in action research as a summative modular assessment that could act as a lead into a longer-term thesis project. Review the number of group assessments considering their appropriateness for the target market and practical issues regarding online collaboration for completion of same
4. Outline the ATU policy approach to artificial intelligence (AI) in the programme assessment strategy, ensuring that this is communicated to students in the programme handbook thereby, ensuring their understanding of how AI can and should be used in assessment. Assessment design should consider academic integrity and AI e.g., inclusion of 'theory-practice-based' elements. In addition, provide students with an explicit opportunity to engage with AI during the programme as an opportunity for them to evaluate writing and the capabilities of AI.
5. Revisit the reading lists for modules to ensure they are up to date and integrate Irish based authors where feasible.
6. Consider whether four electives should be offered in the first instance; providing students with elective choice and helping establish where demand for elective modules lies. Consider developing a specific elective in 'Additional Education Needs' as the current inclusion of this topic in Inclusivity in Education does not give it the attention it deserves. Mindful that would reduce the time allocated to the other important themes in the current module perhaps those come under the heading of Equality and Diversity in Education.
7. Leadership in Education: Include an additional focus on 'relational competencies' in this module.
8. Inclusivity in Education: Diverse learning needs should be emphasised in this module in addition to identity, particularly if a specific elective module on this topic is not developed. Also, address the overlap between this module and Global Citizenship Education.
9. Global Citizenship Education: Review the proposed assessment approach for this module, moving beyond a celebratory or showcasing approach to a more critical approach. Here again, potentially framing the assessment as an initial reconnaissance for a future action research project could probe how staff and students' views of multi-cultural events in schools and provide data to inform and improve practice. Consider retitling the module as 'Education for Sustainability' or echoing the title of the new Leaving Certificate module. Foreground sustainability and social justice in this module. Re-examine module learning outcome 4.
10. Practitioner Research Methods: Action and practitioner research should be articulated more strongly in this module, given the overall philosophy of the programme.
11. Review and revise the inconsistency in language as to who will be taught in the programme. Learner, candidate and participant are variously used to mean the same thing. The use of term 'student' throughout might be more appropriate.
12. The programme document mentions appealing to further education and primary teachers, but this is not reflected throughout the document where the programme is directed primarily at post-primary teachers.

Report Approval

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

<div>Signed:</div> <div></div> <div><div>Name</div><div>Validation Panel Chair</div></div>	<div><div>Date</div><div>12-02-2025</div></div>
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