New Programme Validation External Review Panel Final Report

Programme Reference Number:	S014
Faculty/School(s):	Science
Department(s):	Environmental Science
Type of Review:	External Panel

Details of Programme(s) Reviewed:

Title:	Award Type:	NFQ Level:	ECTS:	Duration:	Delivery Mode:	Proposed Student Intake:	Proposed Start Date:
Certificate in Introduction to Blanket Peatland Restoration	Minor	6	10	1 Sem	Onsite	10	Sep. 2025
Certificate in Blanket Peatland Restoration	Minor	9	10	1 Sem	Online	10	Sep. 2025

Date of Review:	4th March 2025

Review Panel

Panellist Role	Title	Name	Organisation	Job Title
Chair	Dr	Derek O'Byrne	South East Technological University	Vice President for Academic Affairs & Registrar
External Academic Discipline Expert	Professor	Quentin G. Crowley	Trinity College Dublin, Ireland	Director Trinity Centre for the Environment
External Academic Discipline Expert	Dr	Indiana A. Olbert	University of Galway, Ireland	Lecturer in Civil Engineering, Programme Director Project and Construction Management Leader EcoHydro-Informatics Research Group
Industry/ Community Representative	Dr	Luís Campos Rodrigues	ENT Environment and Management, Lisbon Portugal	Senior Environmental Consultant and Researcher
Student Representative	Mr	Mallikharjuna Rao Sakhamuri	ATU	Student Representative
Vice President for Academic Affairs and Registrar (VPAAR) Nominee (Academic and Recording Secretary)	Dr	Aodhmar Cadogan	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 Salem Gharbia	Head of Department of Environmental Sciences
Dr Thomas Smyth	Head of Faculty of Science
Mr Brian Doyle	Lecturer
Shane Connolly	Faculty Support Officer

Introduction

Certificate in Introduction to Blanket Peatland Restoration(Level 6): This module introduces the fundamentals of practical blanket peatland restoration. The module aims to provide an introduction to practical skills for restoring and managing these ecosystems, while driving community engagement in restoration projects.

Certificate in Blanket Peatland Restoration(Level 9): The proposed module in Peatland Bog Restoration is designed as an advanced programme to provide postgraduate students and professionals with in-depth theoretical understanding and expert-level practical skills to lead restoration and management initiatives.

Rationale for Programme(s)

Certificate in Introduction to Blanket Peatland Restoration is aimed at landowner, environmentalists and members of the agri-sector who are key stakeholders in Peatland ecology and management. This module will provide skills to those interested in conservation management and restoration of Natura 2000 sites.

Certificate in Blanket Peatland Restoration is aimed at postgraduate students in environmental science, ecology, geography, or sustainability disciplines, Mid- to senior-level professionals in consultancy, environmental policy, or land management or private and public bodies who are stakeholders in peatland management. This course directly addresses global and national sustainability challenges and prepares participants for leadership roles in environmental restoration.

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 module 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 module is suitably structured ensures that students can successfully achieve the Learning Outcomes.
4. The teaching, learning and assessment strategy is well planned and appropriate for the discipline area and type of award.
5. Assessment techniques are fair, valid, reliable, consistent and a credible measure of the academic standard attained by students.

6. The planned resources, including staff, physical, online, library and student supports, sufficiently support the teaching, learning and assessment strategy for the programme.
7. The programme facilitates lifelong learning for a diverse student population by setting out appropriate entry requirements and opportunities for access, transfer, and progression.
8. There is demand for potential graduates for the awards.
9. 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.

Findings

Overall Finding

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

Reason for Overall Finding

Following the Panel meeting on the 4th march 2025 the panel recommended a number of significant changes to the two modules. Following a re-submission of the documentation, the panel completed a desk review and agree that the issues identified through the interim report have been addressed and the proposed certificates can now be validated without changes.

Commendations

The Validation Panel advises Academic Council of the following commendations.

The choice of topic is well considered, as it's important for Ireland and very timely. These are unique micro-credentials in Ireland, which is very commendable.

Conditions and or Recommendations

None.

The Validation Panel advises Academic Council that 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.

Report Approval

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

Signed:	
Name: Dr. Derek O'Byrne Validation Panel Chair	Date: 04 Apr. 2025

Table of Contents

SG_SBLAN_S06
Certificate in Introduction to Blanket Peatland
Restoration

Programme Overview

Type of Award	Special Purpose Award		
Programme Title	Certificate in Introduction to Blanket Peatland Restoration		
Proposed Commencement Date	2025		
Status	Draft	**Programme Code**	SG_SBLAN_S06
Framework Level	06	**Number of ECTS**	10 ECTS
Delivered By	Semester	**Minimum Duration**	1
Minimum Course Grade	40	**Classified Award**	No
Primary Award Standard	Science	**Secondary Award Standard**	
ISCED Code	0520 - Environment not further def	**RGAM Code**	1 - Non Laboratory
Proposed Delivery Mode(s)	Online Learning		
Contains Work Placement	No	**Work Placement Credits**	
Contains Work-based Project	No	**Work-based Project Credits**	
PSRB Recognition Planned	No	**Garda Vetting Required**	No
Fitness to Practice Applies	No	**Interim List of Eligble Programmes ILEP**	No
Department	Environmental Science	**Campus**	ATU Sligo
Programme Authors			
Salem Gharbia, Shane Connolly, Brian Doyle			

Entry Requirements and Access Routes

Candidates must hold a qualification equal or higher than level 5 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

English Language Requirements

English Language Requirements will be as determined by ATU and as published in the Access, Transfer and Progression code. The current requirements are as follows:

Non-EU applicants who are not English speakers must have a minimum score of 6.0 (with a minimum of 6.0 in each component) in the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) or equivalent. All results must have been achieved within 2 years of application to ATU.

EU applicants who are not English speakers are recommended to have a minimum score of 6.0 (with a minimum of 6.0 in each component) in the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) or equivalent.

Applications

Applications for this programme are made directly to the university.

Programme Learning Outcomes

On completion of this programme the learner will/should be able to:

PLO	Programme Learning Outcome
PLO 1	Differentiate between the different types of peatland in Ireland, namely raised and blanket bogs, by examining their location, extent, formation, historical use including archaeological and cultural importance.
PLO 2	Identify the characteristics of both healthy and impacted blanket peatland systems, in terms of surface vegetation, drainage status, exposed peat soils and other peatland features.

PLO 3	Identify the hazards and risks, to humans and the environment, associated with the practicalities of peatland restoration works, and the legislative background to health and safety and environmental protection in this area.
PLO 4	Recommend appropriate restoration techniques for degraded blanket bogs and long-term monitoring strategies for evaluating ecological recovery.
PLO 5	Review both private and community-led peatland restoration projects including; the steps and considerations required to undertake works, an understanding of the expertise and skills of the personnel involved, their legislation and policy frameworks and the support networks available to practitioners.

Approved Programme Schedule - SG_SBLAN_S06 Certificate in Introduction to Blanket Peatland Restoration

Stage 1

Delivery	Code	Module Title	Level	Credit	M/E	OL	OL IL	CA	PJ	PC	FE	Total
SEM 1	ENVR06094	Certificate in Introduction to Blanket Peatland Restoration	06	10	M	2.53	10.00	30	70	0	0	100
				Credit Total	10							

Area Effective Term	Credits Required	Award Classification Percentage
202500	10	100 %

Stage / Semester Average Weekly Contact Hours	OL
Semester 1	2.53
Stage Total Average Weekly Contact Hours	2.53

Note: The duration listed for each module on the Approved Programme Schedule includes module delivery, revision and assessment

Note: Average weekly hours for programmes with more than two semesters per stage and which have year-long modules may not calculate correctly

Key
M/E - Mandatory/Elective, OL - Online Learning Hours, IL - Independent Learning Hours, CA - Coursework Assessment, PJ - Project, PC - Practical, FE - Final Exam,

Table of Contents

SG_SBLAN_S09
Certificate in Blanket Peatland Restoration

Programme Overview

Type of Award	Special Purpose Award		

Programme Title	Certificate in Blanket Peatland Restoration		

Proposed Commencement Date	2025		

Status	Draft	Programme Code	SG_SBLAN_S09
Framework Level	09	Number of ECTS	10 ECTS
Delivered By	Semester	Minimum Duration	1
Minimum Course Grade	40	Classified Award	No
Primary Award Standard	Science	Secondary Award Standard	
ISCED Code	0520 - Environment not further def	RGAM Code	1 - Non Laboratory
Proposed Delivery Mode(s)	Online Learning		
Contains Work Placement	No	Work Placement Credits	
Contains Work-based Project	No	Work-based Project Credits	
PSRB Recognition Planned	No	Garda Vetting Required	No
Fitness to Practice Applies	No	Interim List of Eligble Programmes ILEP	No
Department	Environmental Science	Campus	ATU Sligo

Programme Authors
Salem Gharbia, Shane Connolly, Brian Doyle

Entry Requirements and Access Routes

Candidates must hold a cognate level 8 Bachelor (Hons) degree with a minimum grade classification of H2.2 or equivalent.

English Language Requirements

English Language Requirements will be as determined by ATU and as published in the Access, Transfer and Progression code. The current requirements are as follows:

Non-EU applicants who are not English speakers must have a minimum score of 6.0 (with a minimum of 6.0 in each component) in the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) or equivalent. All results must have been achieved within 2 years of application to ATU.

EU applicants who are not English speakers are recommended to have a minimum score of 6.0 (with a minimum of 6.0 in each component) in the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) or equivalent.

Applications

Applications for this programme are made directly to the university.

Programme Learning Outcomes

On completion of this programme the learner will/should be able to:

PLO	Programme Learning Outcome
PLO 1	Characterise the different types of peatland in Ireland, namely raised and blanket bogs, by examining their location, extent, formation, historical use including archaeological and cultural importance.
PLO 2	Critique the scientific principles that support ecosystem and soil function, carbon sequestration and peatland formation.

PLO 3	Mitigate for the hazards and risks, to humans and the environment, associated with the practicalities of peatland restoration works, and the legislative background to such works.
PLO 4	Scrutinise the characteristics of a healthy peatland system, such as its ecology and hydrology and conversely, the characteristics of an impacted peatland.
PLO 5	Communicate appropriate restoration techniques for degraded blanket bogs and monitoring strategies for evaluating ecological recovery.
PLO 6	Develop peatland restoration plans, including the steps and considerations required to undertake works, and using tools, such as GIS to create maps for communicating project design.

Approved Programme Schedule - SG_SBLAN_S09 Certificate in Blanket Peatland Restoration

Stage 1

Delivery	Code	Module Title	Level	Credit	M/E	OL	OL IL	CA	PJ	PC	FE	Total
SEM 1	ENVI09009	Certificate in Blanket Peatland Restoration	09	10	M	2.53	10.00	30	70	0	0	100
				Credit Total	10							

Area Effective Term	Credits Required	Award Classification Percentage
202500	10	100 %

Stage / Semester Average Weekly Contact Hours	OL
Semester 1	2.53
Stage Total Average Weekly Contact Hours	2.53

Note: The duration listed for each module on the Approved Programme Schedule includes module delivery, revision and assessment

Note: Average weekly hours for programmes with more than two semesters per stage and which have year-long modules may not calculate correctly

Key
M/E - Mandatory/Elective, OL - Online Learning Hours, IL - Independent Learning Hours, CA - Coursework Assessment, PJ - Project, PC - Practical, FE - Final Exam,