

REPORT OF PROGRAMME VALIDATION PANEL

Part 1 Programme details

Current title and programme code	BSc (Hons) in Spatial Planning BSc (Hons) in Environmental Management TU835
Mode and duration of programme	Four years, full-time
ECTS	240
TU Dublin award(s) sought	Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Spatial Planning (Level 8) Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Environmental Management (Level 8)
Classifications of award(s)	First Class Honours; Second Class Honours, First Division; Second Class Honours, Second Division; Pass
School responsible	School of Transport Engineering, Environment & Planning
Professional body accreditation and relevant dates	For the Spatial Planning award: Irish Planning Institute (IPI) Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) Ireland
External provider type (where applicable)	NA
Delivery location	TU Dublin Bolton Street

Part 2 Programme review information

Date of review event	6 May 2022
Date of approval by Academic Quality Assurance & Enhancement Committee (AQAEC)	
Proposed date of commencement of revised programme	September 2022

Part 3 Programme background/structure

Background

The Bachelor of Science Honours Degree programme is a full-time combined four-year undergraduate programme. Students take all subjects in year one and in year two

students are required to choose between two streams, either Spatial Planning or Environmental Management. Depending on which pathway students select they will obtain one of the following awards: BSc (Hons) in Spatial Planning or BSc (Hons) in Environmental Management. Both streams continue to work together collaboratively throughout the full programme, although each group becomes increasingly specialised within their chosen stream as the programme progresses.

As part of the review preparation the Programme Team identified a number of key priorities for the review, including raising the profile of the programme, revising the Student Handbook, reviewing and developing the curriculum, developing certain key thematic initiatives, and establishing adequate environmental laboratory facilities. A number of other changes to the programme is also proposed as part of this review.

Stated aims and learning outcomes of the programme

The BSc in Spatial Planning & Environmental Management (TU835) intends to prepare skilled, enterprising and reflective graduates who are career-ready and equipped for the complex demands and creative needs of the planning and environmental sectors.

Knowledge

On successful completion of this programme graduates will:

- have an understanding of critical theories, concepts and methods pertaining to spatial planning and environmental management
- understand current social, cultural, ecological and economic issues and their inter-relationships at different scales
- have an understanding of the natural world, as well as the social and economic dimensions of environmental issues, both locally and globally
- have detailed knowledge and understanding of a wide range of applied practices in either spatial planning or environmental management
- have a comprehensive understanding of the imperatives of climate change and contemporary approaches to mitigation and adaptation for climate change
- appreciate the role that planning and environmental management plays in society including institutional, economic and regulatory aspects within a sustainable framework

Know-How and Skill

On successful completion of this programme graduates will:

- be able to develop solutions for sustainable development in response to changing demands on the built and natural environment
- Exercise appropriate judgement in complex planning, urban design and/or environmental management processes at local, regional, national and trans-national scales
- Identify, analyse and interpret sources of spatial and other data for use in spatial planning and environmental management contexts

- be able to confidently engage with community, government and industry stakeholders on contemporary spatial planning and environmental management issues
- be able to synthesise environmental, economic and social data to assist society with making choices for the future allocation and management of resources
- be able to make important contributions in a wide range of environment-related areas, such as protecting water, air and soil quality; addressing biodiversity loss and managing natural habitats; tackling issues of waste; and carrying out environmental assessments
- be familiar with a wide range of knowledge areas that include economics, sociology, spatial awareness and environmental or planning law

Competence

On successful completion of this programme graduates will:

- have an appreciation of the necessity of sustainable development at local, regional, national and global scales
- be able to make decisions which consider all facets of society, coastal, urban and rural, and at all scales from local to national
- be able to reflect and analyse spatial and environmental contexts and develop independent viewpoints, balancing the perspectives of often conflicting perspectives
- be able to work and behave professionally and ethically professional environments in spatial planning, environmental management and closely related disciplines
- be able to conduct independent research into spatial planning and environmental management issues and develop evidence-based solutions to practical issues
- be able to design and present professional presentations on spatial planning and environmental management topics to a knowledgeable audience
- be able to work effectively both independently and as part of a team
- be able to work effectively within multi-disciplinary environments
- integrate and apply knowledge and learning from and between other domains and discipline areas

Programme structure

Students take all subjects in year one. In year two students are required to choose between and then continue within the Spatial Planning or Environmental Management streams. Year Four allows full specialisation in a chosen field, including a relevant work placement and the completion of a dissertation.

Entry Requirements

The minimum entry requirements are six passes in the Leaving Certificate, with a minimum grade of H5 in at least two subjects, a minimum grade of O6/H7 in English or Irish and a minimum grade of O6/H7 in Mathematics. Eight places are held for applicants who have successfully completed courses at Level 5/6 with at least five distinctions.

Applications from HEAR, DARE and Mature Students, international students, students from the TU Dublin Access to Higher Education Foundation programme and those with disabilities are all welcomed. Applications for advanced entry to the programme shall also be considered.

Student assessment

In accordance with TU Dublin General Assessment Regulations.

Derogations from the General Assessment Regulation

None sought.

Part 4 Review details and membership of panel

Date of Review Event: Friday 6 May 2022

(conducted via Microsoft Teams)

Schedule of Meetings

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| 09.00 am | Introductory meeting between Panel, Dean of Engineering & Built Environment, Head and Assistant Head of the School of Transport Engineering, Environment and Planning, Chairperson and key members of Programme Committee. Presentation from School. |
| 9.30 am | Private meeting of Panel to discuss agenda. |
| 10.15 am | Meeting with Head and Assistant Head of School, Chairperson and members of the Programme Committee, to discuss specific issues raised by the Panel. |
| 11.45 am | Meeting of Panel with staff teaching on the programme to discuss such matters as syllabi, teaching methods and assessment issues. |
| 12.45 pm | Panel meets with group of current students and graduates of the programme. |
| 1.15 pm | Lunch |
| 1.45 pm | Private meeting of Panel to consider draft reports. |
| 3.30 pm | Final meeting of Panel with Head and Assistant Head of School, Programme Chair and other staff as appropriate. |

Panel Membership

External Members

Caroline Creamer	Director of the International Centre for Local and Regional Development (ICLRD) and Research Fellow
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Miles Newman Principal Ecologist at RPS Ireland

Dr Micheline Sheehy Skeffington Emeritus Senior Lecturer, Botany & Plant Science, School of Natural Sciences, NUI Galway

Internal Members

Professor Cliona Doris (Chair) TU Dublin Conservatoire

Dr Denis O’Shea School of Food Science & Environmental Health, TU Dublin

Quality Assurance Officer

Jan Cairns Quality Assurance Officer, TU Dublin

Part 5 Summary of Panel findings against key questions

Is the market demand and need for the programme clear and articulated?	Yes, however see Recommendation 1 in this regard
Are the aims, objectives and learning outcomes of the programme well-founded and clearly formulated?	See Condition 1 in this regard.
Are the entry requirements clear and appropriate?	Yes
Are the arrangements for access, transfer and progression in accordance with University policy and NFQ?	Yes
Are the programme learning outcomes at the appropriate level as set out by the NFQ requirements?	Yes
Do the individual modules ‘add up’ to a coherent programme?	See Condition in this regard.
Are Graduate Attributes embedded within the programme?	Yes
Will the accumulation of the module learning outcomes result in the attainment of the programme learning outcomes?	See Condition 2 in this regard.
Is there appropriate use of student-centred learning, teaching and assessment strategies, including the First Year Framework for Success checklist, which recognise the needs of diverse student groups?	Yes

Do the curricula and teaching schemes in each module descriptor give realisable substance to the module's aims, objectives and learning outcomes?	See Condition 2 in this regard.
Are the assessment methods and criteria aligned to the learning outcomes in each module?	See Condition 1 in this regard
Are facilities and resources, including staff, in place to support the delivery of the programme at the standard proposed?	Yes, for the most part. See Recommendations 8, 9 & 13 in this regard.

Part 6 Findings of the Panel

The Panel is pleased to recommend to TU Dublin continuing approval of the Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Planning and Environmental Management, leading to the awards of Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Spatial Planning and Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Environmental Management, at Level Eight within the National Framework of Qualifications, subject to two conditions and with sixteen recommendations and one observation.

The Panel commends the Programme Team for:

- developing a highly innovative programme, with significant civic engagement and real life learning, and the excellent integration of a range of diverse modules
- the emphasis on field courses, and on the formalisation of the work placement
- the School's formal and informal industry links
- high level of progression for graduates to careers aligned to the programme
- the strength of the relationships between staff and students
- the initiatives taken to reach out to potential applicants
- the significant work undertaken by the Programme Team for the preparation of this review.

Conditions

1. The Programme Team needs to have in place a schedule/calendar of assessments. This will enable students to see at a glance how many assessments they must complete and the timings/deadlines for these. It will also assist the Team in planning module assessments. The schedule should also indicate when students should expect to receive feedback on their assessment, to ensure that this is provided in a timely manner.
2. The Programme Team should demonstrate how the programme learning outcomes align to the modules. This may require an enhancement of programme and module learning outcomes.

Recommendations

1. The Panel considers the programme to be very strong in terms of its programme content and demand in relevant sectors for its graduates. It commends the various initiatives that the Programme Team has put in place to attract more applicants. However, given the intention to increase student numbers in the programme to make it sustainable, the Panel considers that the Team should give further consideration to a marketing plan for the programme. While the Team is using the programme website for the promotion of the programme, the Panel asks the Team to consider how potential students are directed towards this website. In addition, the Panel recommends that in the overall marketing plan for the programme there is nationwide outreach. It suggests that the Team looks to develop material such as social media videos with a strong student input and focus on student activities. It encourages the Team to review its target audience to address the current student gender imbalance and to utilise, for example, the existing STEM outreach in this regard. In relation to this, the perception expressed by a student that they had believed the programme to be essentially a planning degree might need some consideration.
2. The Panel recommends that to support and reflect internationalisation the programme documentation including modules should highlight where relevant the influence of global challenges, policy and practice, such as the global carbon balance.
3. The Panel understands that climate change and related issues and challenges are embedded throughout all modules. It recommends that as sustainable development is a key theme of the programme this and climate change be made more explicit within modules and also in promotional material.
4. The Panel notes that students are encouraged to challenge current systems and policies from the outset of the programme. The Panel recommends that this be more visible within the module descriptors.
5. The Panel acknowledges that the Programme Team has reviewed the assessment of the dissertation and that the assessment for this 25 ECTS module now has a 100%

weighting on the final dissertation. The Panel recommends that the Programme Team reconsider this to ensure that work completed, as well as dissemination opportunities, in addition to the final dissertation, is recognised and contributes to the overall module mark.

6. The Spatial Planning stream (in particular 2nd and 3rd year) should be reviewed in order to rebalance the workload more evenly between semesters one and two.
7. The Programme Team should reconsider where there are modules assessed entirely by one final written examination. Similarly, where the module assessment is stated as being 100% continuous assessment, it seems that in reality this is broken down into separate assessments. This should be clarified within the module descriptors. The Panel also notes that this breakdown will be required within the Programme & Module Catalogue.
8. The Panel supports the School in seeking to increase the number of full and/or part-time lecturing staff and to reduce the programme's reliance on HPALs, while maintaining the significant input of industry and related practitioners in the delivery of the programme through the guest lecturer programme.
9. The Panel concurs with the Programme Team that staffing resources are important for the support of the field trips/courses and for the management and administration of the work placement, and it supports the School in seeking to address this through the Organisation Design.
10. The Panel supports the School in exploring avenues to support students to attend Field Trip (Courses) where financial support is needed.
11. The Panel recommends that the Programme Team explore interactions with other HEIs delivering similar programmes to share resources, to support for example field courses and for potential graduate student exchange.
12. The Panel understands the circumstances around professional accreditation of the Environmental Management stream and recommends that this is revisited periodically by the Team in case this situation changes. The Panel is cognisant that the School has links with a number of professional bodies, associations and societies and encourages students to engage with these.
13. The Panel recommends that students on the programme should be provided with access to an Environmental Management laboratory that is adequately resourced and equipped and which has appropriate technical support.
14. The programme documentation should be reviewed, proofread and updated, and employ more consistency in style and content across modules. Reading lists need to

be more current and references to old websites and policies need to be removed or updated.

15. The Team should review again the balance of contact hours and self-directed learning across all modules.
16. The Field Trip modules should be renamed Field Courses/Excursions, depending on the length.

Observation

The Panel notes that the Programme Team does not intend to offer exit awards for a student who leaves the programme having completed over 120 or 180 ECTS and the rationale for this decision. The Panel's view is that while such awards may not facilitate student progression into careers in planning and environmental management, they will provide recognition of the learning completed by the student which may facilitate entry into other careers or programmes of education.