OLLSCOIL TEICNEOLAÍOCHTA
BHAILE ÁTHA CLIATH

DUBLIN

TECHNOLOGICAL
UNIVERSITY DUBLIN

SCHOOL OF BUSINESS BLANCHARDSTOWN CAMPUS

AND

SCHOOL OF BUSINESS & HUMANITIES TALLAGHT CAMPUS

NEW PROGRAMME VALIDATION REPORT

**Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Accounting & Finance
(Programme TU933)**

**Bachelor of Science in Accounting & Finance
(Programme TU788/TU101)**

**Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Accounting & Finance
(Programme TU208/TU108, Level 8 Add-on)**

**Bachelor of Science in Accounting & Finance
(Programme TU201/TU102, Level 7 Add-on)**

**Higher Certificate in Accounting & Business
(Level 6 Exit Award)**

Blanchardstown Campus,   Tallaght Campus,
Blanchardstown Road North, Dublin 15,   Blessington Rd, Tallaght, Dublin 24,
D15 YV78   D24 FKT9

http://www.tudublin.ie/

Introduction

Ireland's first Technological University, The Technological University Dublin (TU Dublin), was designated on January 1, 2019. With three campuses located at Grangegorman, Blanchardstown and Tallaght, TU Dublin's programmes are underpinned by an inclusive and open learning experience, offering pathways to education and training from Level 6 (Apprenticeships/Higher Certificate) through to Level 10 (Doctorate) awards in the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ[1]). Technological University Dublin is a Designated Awarding Body, with the authority in law to make awards under the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education & Training) Act 2012[2]. The purpose of this document is to report on the findings of the Peer Review panel that was convened to validate the *Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Accounting and Finance* (including the embedded awards), against the criteria for the validation of programmes as stipulated in the University's Policy Document 2MP01[3].

Programme Overview

The proposed programme advances the existing programmes to support our people and communities, to be truly relevant and to deliver real impact. In 2019, through engagement with our stakeholders and analysis of CAO data, the University found that: There was confusion in the market arising from perceived similarity of programmes being offered on the different campuses; limited competition actually existed across campus locations with Tallaght and Blanchardstown student recruitment markets showing as very distinct groups, and the limited competition primarily arising from campus location factors. Following this, the School of Business and Humanities, Tallaght and the School of Business, Blanchardstown have proposed this joint Accounting and Finance programme offering under a single Level 7 code and a single Level 8 code that allow the student to then select the campus of choice.

The aims of the programmes are to produce graduates who have both the depth and breadth of learning to succeed within a modern accounting, finance and business context. The programmes are designed to be both cross and multi-disciplinary, to prepare graduates with strong disciplinary knowledge and skills – ready for the disruptive and challenging business world. Employability opportunities are maximised for the graduates by the provision of dual accreditation with exemptions from the professional bodies and through giving students the opportunity to complete a work placement and to capture their transversal employability skills with the Student Transformative Learning Transcript (STLR). The introduction of the Data Management and Business Intelligence Pillar will ensure that the graduates of this programme will be ready to work with the relevant technological advances in the industry.

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[1] QQI. 2018. National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ)

[2] Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012, [No. 28]. 81 pp.

[3] 2MP01 Design, Validation and Accreditation of New Academic Programmes

Validation Panel Composition

Chair: Dr Peter Cleary
                          Senior Lecturer in Accounting
                          Cork University Business School
                          University College Cork

Member(s): *Academic*

                          Mr Gerard O'Donovan
                          Head of Faculty of Business and Humanities
                          Munster Technological University – Cork

                          Ms Danielle McWall
                          Head of the Department of Accounting, Finance and Economics
                          Ulster University

Member(s): *Business/Industry*

                          Ms Aoife McCormack
                          Finance Manager, Fujitsu IRELAND

                          Mr Brian Murphy,
                          Partner, Audit & Assurance, Deloitte Ireland LLP

In attendance:

                          Dr Larry McNutt, Registrar, TU Dublin Blanchardstown Campus

                          Dr Philip Owende, Academic Quality Manager, TU Dublin Blanchardstown Campus
                          (Panel Secretary)

Date of Panel Meeting: April 16, 2021.

Consultation

Management Team consulted during the panel meeting:

Name	Designation
Assumpta Harvey	Head of School of Business, Blanchardstown Campus
Dr Damien Roche	Head of School of Business & Humanities, Tallaght Campus
Christine Nangle	Head of Department of Accountancy, Finance and Professional Studies, Tallaght Campus
Dr Fiona Malone	Head of Department of Business, Blanchardstown Campus
Sandra Thompson	Programme Manager, School of Business, Blanchardstown Campus

Academic staff contributing to programme development and were consulted during the panel meeting:

Name	Designation
Andrew Watters	Lecturer in Business Computing, Tallaght Campus
Anne Marie Nolan	Lecturer in Marketing & Entrepreneurship, Blanchardstown Campus
Bairbre Brennan	Lecturer in Marketing, Blanchardstown Campus
Bernadette Lea	Lecturer in Financial Reporting and Audit, Tallaght Campus
Dr Blathnaid McGeough	Lecturer in Management, Tallaght Campus
Brian Watters	Senior Lecturer School of Business, Blanchardstown Campus
Dr Colm Mc Guinness	Lecturer in Mathematics & Statistics, Blanchardstown Campus
Denise Behan	Lecturer in Mathematics, Tallaght Campus
Elizabeth Downes	Lecturer in Business Management, Tallaght Campus
Evelyn Casey	Lecturer in Marketing, Tallaght Campus
Dr Francis McGeough	Lecturer in Accounting & Finance, Blanchardstown Campus
Dr Gail Sheppard	Lecturer in Financial and Management Accounting, Tallaght Campus
Gerard Phelan	Lecturer in Finance and Economics, Tallaght Campus
Honora McCarrick	Lecturer in Law, Tallaght Campus
Joseph Varley	Lecturer in Law, Tallaght Campus
Linda McWeeney	Lecturer in Accounting & Finance, Blanchardstown Campus
Lindsay Murray	Lecturer in Finance, Financial Reporting and AIS, Tallaght Campus
Loretta Kyne	Lecturer in Financial Reporting and Tax, Tallaght Campus
Margaret Dooner	Lecturer in Business Computing Tallaght Campus
Mark Lonergan	Lecturer in Accounting & Finance, Blanchardstown Campus
MaryJane Webberley	Lecturer in Accounting & Finance, Blanchardstown Campus
Nigel Donnelly	Lecturer in Economics & Finance, Tallaght Campus
Pasqueline Tierney	Lecturer in Finance and Management Accounting, Tallaght Campus
Patricia Morris	Senior Lecturer in Accounting, Tallaght Campus
Paul Gormley	Lecturer in Law, Tallaght Campus
Robert O'Shea	Lecturer in Business, Blanchardstown Campus
Dr Siobhan Killion	Lecturer in Accounting & Finance, Blanchardstown Campus
Susan Looby	Lecturer in Accounting & Finance, Blanchardstown Campus
Tara Clarke	Lecturer in Business Management, Tallaght Campus
Terence Sheridan	Lecturer in Accounting & Finance, Blanchardstown Campus
Thomas Kane	Lecturer in Financial Reporting and Tax, Tallaght Campus
Tom McGrath	Lecturer in Accounting & Finance, Blanchardstown Campus
Tom Mulvey	Lecturer in Business, Blanchardstown Campus

The programme development process was supported by the following Heads of Function:

Dr Larry McNutt	Registrar, TU Dublin Blanchardstown Campus
Dr Philip Owende	Academic Quality Manager, Blanchardstown Campus

Validation Panel Findings

In evaluating the appropriateness, quality and proposed operation of this programme the following criteria were considered and are hereby reported upon:

Strategic planning

The submission outlined TU Dublin Strategic Intent (see Section 3 of Programme Submission Document, subsection 3.5 covering Institutional Overview and Mission). The panel was satisfied that the programme and the design are in keeping with the university's mission and will contribute to key Strategic Objectives outlined in Strategic Intent to 2030. These relate to: teaching and learning and student experience, graduate employment/employability, research, engagement, designation criteria for technological universities, and internationalisation. The university's commitment to supporting the new programme, specifically, as an opportunity for students to share experience across the two campuses, aspiration to nurture research informed and practice-based competences and building of international networks (through the global classroom) were highlighted in the presentation by the programme leadership team.

Evidence of consultation

Upon the designation to TU Dublin in 2019, the programme proposal was developed from a cross-campus consultation process between the legacy institutions in the transformation. A cross-university programmes project was undertaken to develop a coherent TU Dublin handbook for CAO 2021. In relation to the *Accounting and Finance suite of programmes*, the consultation process involved all Business Schools in the University, with a separate meeting between the school in Blanchardstown and Tallaght, with the Head of School of Accounting and Finance in City Campus. Focus group consultation with students and career guidance counsellors from feeder schools was conducted to comprehensively review the existing handbook. Desk research was also conducted to draw comparisons/contrasts with equivalent programme offerings nationally, both in the university and the Institute of Technology sector. Analysis of internal (TU Dublin) CAO data was conducted to identify the feeder schools/regions for offerings on each campus and to evaluate any potential competition by campus locations.

Output from the CAO project highlighted: possible confusion in the market regarding the campus-based offering of programmes with similar titles; that there was relatively limited internal competition across campus locations, and notably, given logistics and transport considerations, internal competition between Tallaght and Blanchardstown programmes was minimal, suggesting very distinct campus location inspired preference. CAO point's levels were an important factor, with City Campus programmes having significantly higher minimum entry points.

On the basis of the CAO 2021 project, it was recommended (approved by TU Dublin Academic Council in 2020) to offer common Accounting and Finance programmes on the Blanchardstown and Tallaght campuses, allowing applicants to first choose the programme and then specify the campus location of choice. The other business programmes including Marketing Management, International Business, Management, and Management & Information Technology would be offered on CAO as a general entry, separately on each campus. It is envisioned that this offers enhanced clarity of choice to potential applicants, whereas the general entry programmes will allow for specialisation choice at entry or at the end of Year 1 of study.

Graduate employment potential

Graduates from the programmes gain employment in a wide range of companies and job roles. From the graduate survey, in which many respondents were relatively recent graduates, most were in trainee or assistant positions earning salaries of between €25,000 and €50,000 pa. Promisingly for an academic programme that encourages lifelong learning, 78% of graduates enrolled for further study, of which 16% progressed to NFQ Level 9 qualifications (Master). A significant proportion of graduates (40%) gain Chartered Accountants Ireland (CAI) and 34% Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) professional

qualifications and titles, which has reinforced the programmes' priority towards enabling exemptions with these two bodies.

Protection of enrolled learners

Part 6 Section 65(1) of the Act[4] does not apply to TU Dublin.

Provisions for quality assurance

The panel was provided with the university policy document covering *Design, Validation and Accreditation of New Academic Courses* (2MP01) and the programme-specific policy document, *Work Placement Policy 2021* supporting the BSc/BSc (Hons) in Accounting and Finance suite of programmes. The validation document also outlined the rationale and how the programme submission had been proposed, developed and approved internally, in compliance with the university's quality assurance policies and procedures (Validation Document Section 6 and 7). The panel noted that the procedures for programme development, proposed monitoring and continuous improvement processes complied with university's policies and guidelines.

The Validation Panel Chair expressed the Panel's unanimity that the quality of the documentation received was outstanding and were received in a timely manner, accompanied with all the necessary supporting information. They panel also stated that related engagements with the Campus Registrar's Office and academic staff leading and supporting the programmes during the validation process, were conducted professionally, and all questions from panel were openly and comprehensively answered.

Programme title and award title

The panel was satisfied that the title of the proposed programme as, BSc in Accounting and Finance is clear, accurately reflects the coverage, and therefore will be able to accurately inform prospective learners and other stakeholders.

However, considering the formal request in the validation process, i.e. for the panel to offer a considered view as to which award designation will support the needs of the student and be recognised by sectoral stakeholders into the future, the panel recommends that:

(a) The Programme Team should revisit the title (not necessarily to change it) to ensure that the final choice will have considered any potential professional body concerns regarding exemptions. Programme team should ensure that there is adequate consultation with all stakeholders as exemptions are a unique selling point for the proposed programmes.

(b) If the proposed programmes will be retained as a BSc Award Title, then ensure that the outcomes align with QQI Award Standard for Science Programmes.

Ethics

Underpinning and embedded across modules in the programmes presented for validation, is recognition of the importance of developing the supporting knowledge and demonstrated understanding from the *Law and Tax Pillar* of (among others), the fundamentals of ethics, corporate governance and business law. This effectively supports the programmes' approach to gaining professional body exemptions for its graduates from up to five professional bodies (CAI, ACCA, CIMA, CPA and ITI).

Also, the panel was satisfied that the university has internal policies and procedures in place to ensure appropriate ethical oversight in respect of teaching, learning, and research activity across all programmes at the designated NFQ award levels of the programmes presented for this validation.

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[4] Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012

Consistency

The panel found evidence of structured progression in proposed modules from Semester 1 through Semester 8 of the programme, including the embedded awards. Therefore, the panel was satisfied with the development of the learners' standards of knowledge, skill and competence throughout the individual modules and integrating to achieve the designated Programme Outcomes. However, the panel noted significant inconsistencies where modules in advanced stages of the programme did not prescribe the specific foundation modules as Pre-requisites (e.g., Business Mathematics 1/2, Economics 1/2, Financial Accounting 1/2, etc.). It was the panel's considered view that this scenario could result in a student lacking proficiency in the foundations to fail the subsequent advanced modules, considering that Progression Carrying Credits is allowable in some instances in the proposed campus-based offering.

Therefore, it was recommended that the Programme Team review, and where appropriate, adopt the necessary Pre-requisite and Co-requisites for relevant modules. This will ensure that, where any module in advanced stages of the programme builds upon knowledge and skills acquired in foundation and intermediate modules in previous academic year and/or supporting concurrent modules in the same academic year, they will be appropriately linked. The panel considered this to be a significant flaw in the proposed programmes and therefore attached this recommendation as a *Condition for this Validation*. Also, the panel recommends that the team ensure that the Book of Modules does not make reference to specific campus locations on pages, but only to TU Dublin where such a reference is required.

Teaching and learning

The panel discussed with the programme development team about the range of interactions used with learners in the course in relation to programmes delivery. The panel noted clear evidence of planned structured interactions with learners, coupled with comprehensive academic and technical support arrangements for teaching and learning. Evidence of commitments to learner needs were articulated in both the validation documents (Section 4.9) and in the copious panel discussions with both programme leadership and their respective teams, including (but not limited to): strategic alignment with Irish Government and European Education Initiatives (Section 5.5); commitment by the leadership team to facilitating quality assured learning experience, e.g., ensuring learner exposure to emerging and disruptive technologies in the *Data Management & Business Intelligence* pillar; application of a range of teaching and assessment methods/styles combining both discipline specific knowledge, skills and competency assessments, with transversal employability skills gained from the structured curriculum plus possible recognition of extra-curricula competences through the unique Student Transformative Learning Record (STLR); flexible learning regimes allowing for both full-time and part-time enrolment, including a Higher Certificate Exit Award; well-developed *Work Placement Information Booklet for BSc (Honours) in Accounting & Finance*; pathways for attaining professional competencies through exemptions and demonstration of IT literacy (Microsoft Professional accreditation); formative teaching and learning resources; commitment to the provision of timely feedback on course assignments, and appropriate course management strategies aimed at quality assurance and enhancement.

The panel noted the following commendable aspects of the programme planning, delivery and outcomes:

- Preparation of students for placement (Semester 5 Preplacement Module) and professional practice in general is well developed and will have good impact on students, thus ensuring high employability potential.

- Equally, a lot of material covered in the preparation for placement will ensure proficiency in a range of soft skills to produce well-prepared and well-rounded graduates.

- The inbuilt certifications in programmes were commendable, e.g., the programmes offer students the opportunity to obtain Microsoft Office Master Certification.

Learner assessment

The learner assessment strategies within each module in the programme schedule submitted for validation are to be conducted in accordance with TU Dublin assessment policies and procedures, covering Continuous Assessment (CA), Summative Examinations and assessment in placement and work-based environments (including repeat assessments). Through copious discussions with the programme design team, the range of assessment modes to be employed were articulated. Specifically, the programme team was conscious of the challenges to capturing learning outcomes through such a variety of means of assessment and ensure consistency, i.e., that all learners have fair opportunities to demonstrate achievement of learning outcomes through both CAs and terminal examinations, including the repeat assessments when applicable.

However, it was the panel's considered opinion that the CA strategies as currently presented in the module descriptors indicates that, potentially, students in the two campus locations will be sitting different types of CAs. The panel viewed this as a significant flaw. Therefore, a *Condition for this Validation* is that, in the interest of consistency across campus locations (and considering that final examinations will be common), all CA associated with equivalent stages of programmes (i.e. for each module) should match in format, number of assessments and weighting. It was noted that, this is not only critical for consistency, but also from a legal point of view (e.g., mark distribution could present problems), and consistency will enable appropriate use of the assessment matrix that has been devised for the programmes. Appropriate annual monitoring of performance of common CAs will be required for purposes of quality enhancement.

The panel recommends:

- That the wording under assessment strategy in the Book of Modules should be clear and consistent. Generic use of the statement that, "Reassessment of this module will consist of a repeat examination. It is possible that there will also be a requirement to be reassessed in a coursework element", requires module specific contextual consideration.

- Team to review all modules to ensure that they initially align with QA processes on each campus, and eventually the Marks and Standards under the new university quality framework. Specifically, there is a need to harmonise the prescriptions for repeat assessments and the protocols for individually assessed elements of groupwork/teamwork.

- Leadership team to ensure that academics are accorded appropriate time allowances for supervision/mentoring students on placement, consistent with the university criteria or as defined by the applicable university policy/procedure.

- The training of academic mentors for placement students, and to agree on protocols including provisions of any necessary top-up training as may be required from time-to-time.

- Review of the work placement strategy to enable uptake by as many students as possible. This may necessitate broadening the net of companies (not necessarily confined to accounting firms) and workplace scenarios/organisations considered to satisfy the targeted learning outcomes.

- The panel noted that a significant number of modules in the programmes considered for validation have CA/Examination weighting of 30%/70%. It is understandable that some weightings may be as prescribed by the underlying requirement for exemptions. However, higher weighting for CA provides inherent scope for implementation of innovative approaches to teaching and learning. Therefore, wherever there are no negative impacts on exemption criteria, higher CA weighting should be considered.

Standards of knowledge, skill and competence that could be achieved

The vision of the Accounting and Finance programme, as was outlined by the leadership team, is to help equip students with the knowledge and attributes required to flourish in the workplace; as young workers who combine knowledge with an ability to collaborate across different disciplines are in high demand. Therefore, the focus was to develop the 'T Student', i.e., student bearing in-depth knowledge and skills in

their chosen areas of specialisation, along with the desire and ability to make connections across disciplines. The copious discussions between the panel and programme leadership team highlighted the design vision of the programmes to be both cross and multi-disciplinary, in order to prepare graduates with strong disciplinary knowledge and skills– ready for the disruptive and challenging business world.

Having reviewed the syllabi and assessment strategies as proposed, subject to the *Conditions for Validation and Recommendations* outlined in this report, the panel was of the opinion that learners would be capable of attaining the standards of knowledge, skills and competences relevant for the award of BSc (Honours) in Accounting and Finance and the embedded awards, including the Higher Certificate offered as an Exit Award, if required.

The panel specifically commended the *Data Management & Business Intelligence* pillar. It was the considered opinion of the panel that, when compared with offerings of similar programmes in equivalent HE institutions, this pillar is innovative and advanced, therefore capable of enhancing the quality of the student experience and their employability potential.

Access, transfer and progression
The panel considered that the programme incorporates appropriate quality assurance procedures for managing access, transfer and progressions to the programmes per the University's admission policy (Section 4.5 to 4.7 of validation document). The programme clearly sets out the minimum entry requirements through the CAO process and also consider transfers and advance entry students into the add-on programmes in the ladder system in operation.

As currently structured, the Higher Certificate in Accounting & Business is an Exit Award at NFQ Level 6. On successful completion of the NFQ Level 7 award, students will have the opportunity to progress to NFQ Level 8 (Honours Degree). On successful completion of 2 years of study in the programme, it is expected that students will have gained the four foundation/fundamental modules on the ACCA, CIMA and CPA syllabus (exemptions will need to be confirmed with each of the professional bodies). Having achieved the prescribed exemptions, successful students can progress from the NFQ Level 7 BSc in Accounting and Finance directly to ACCA, CIMA or CPA.

Progression to TU Dublin Level 9 Programmes is also possible where students have met the specified minimum entry requirements. Example programmes include (among others): TU Dublin PG Dip (Accounting) 1 Year Full Time (TU304); TU Dublin MBS International Accounting 1 Year Full Time (TU324); TU Dublin MSc in Banking & Finance (International) 2 Year Full Time (TU313); TU Dublin PG Dip in Finance 1 Year Full Time (TU314); TU Dublin Master Business Studies 2 Years Part Time (TU302) etc.

Other notable observations/considerations emanating from discussions with the Validation Panel

- Engagement with industry informed thinking during the process of programme development –– Programmes in both campuses maintain processes for continuous engagement with relevant industry partners, primarily to embed desirable qualities of a rounded graduate progressively through the coursework. Engagement activities include, industry participation in this programme validation, conducting seminars related to building interpersonal skills (guest speakers and graduates), work placement, etc. The target is to establish a clear pathway for the validation of relevant professional exemptions at the end of this process. The programme team is experienced in mapping competency and assessments, and the plan is to procure validation as quickly as possible.

- Whether programme/award title should be BSc or BBS–– The Panel advised that the award title should be guided by the descriptors in the QQI Award Standards, Science-Award Standards or Business-Award Standards, following appropriate mapping exercises. Also, the vision for the programme should be considered, e.g., BSc may be more recognisable by international companies.

- Management of Quality across campuses⸺ There shall be one programme board to ensure consistency in programme management. Where final/terminal examination applies, there shall be a Common Examination Paper, which inherently accords staff the opportunity to work together. Any local issues to be handled locally, but where deemed necessary, such are to be escalated to programme boards, for transparency and visibility towards quality enhancement. Noted that the programmes have highly qualified staff, who will continue to be offered opportunities for upskilling whenever necessary, while respecting the freedom and autonomy of staff in course delivery arrangements. Staff interactions to build upon the joint events that are already in place, e.g., STLR, employment events etc.

- Consistency of Continuous Assessment (CA) across campuses (Will they use the same instruments?) ⸺Highlighted that CA/Exam weighting will be the same. However, assessment design may differ (e.g., MCQ versus essay), but final choices to be jointly discussed/agreed. Plan is for individual lecturers to meet at regular intervals. Noted that if CAs are exactly the same, it may create infringement of assessment integrity across the campuses. It is planned that a CA schedule will be developed and shared across programmes.

- Highlighted that the programme needs to further consider growth and internalisation⸺ Mentioned that individual campus international links will be explored and shared, and the *Global Classroom* approach will also be maintained.

- Decision Making and Risk Analysis Pillar⸺ Highlighted that the CAs are not specified for individual modules, e.g., Mathematics. Also, the submission document reflects uncertainly about shared CA, which gives room for use of different elements. Although the objective is to have common CAs on both campuses, these are yet to be agreed. Programmes should capitalise on the inherent opportunity to introduce integrated assignment in order to reduce the student assessment workload.

  A lot of modules under repeat assessment state that, "reassessment will consist of a repeat exam and may require repeat CA". This should be more definitive, with clear communication to students exactly what the reassessment will constitute. Coverage offers good grounding for professional exams and integration of auditing is good but, it appears that some standards referred to may be out of date. Noted that audit risk is where most students struggle with and needs to be covered in CA, only two Learning Outcomes may be inadequate. Reference to Management Assertions should be rightfully Audit Assertions.

- Specific to Management Accounting⸺ Noted that there are two modules in Year 2 and two in Year 4 of study. Need to indicate how/where pre and co-requisites have been considered. There are no issues with the content *per se*. However, H2016 Capital investment is also covered in Finance; was the opportunity to harmonise considered? Also, to consider adjusting the CA/Exam weighting to incorporate alternative assessments methods, and possibly appropriate integrated assessments to reduce the number of individual assessments from 4 to say 2.

- Compliance: Law & Tax ⸺ Content good and links well, with pillar covering real issues that students will encounter in industry but described assessment strategies in CAs are still left too open.

- Financial Accounting and Reporting⸺ Pillar requires that any module pre-requisites to be specified such that students don't carry failed modules. Also, progression needs to be shown through sequential modules such as Int Finance Reporting 1&2 and Financial Acc. 1&2. Such should not have common Learning Outcomes, e.g., "LO 2: State, discuss and apply selected accounting issues and standards". Ensure that modules labelled as "international" have the international perspective included in the LOs.

  It was highlighted that the biggest issue relates to assessment; Class Tests and Final Examinations don't allow for innovation, therefore, how will employability skills and other cross pillar initiatives be enabled? Assessment matrix considers innovative methods, specifically digital assessment, but document does not quite highlight any assessment innovations. Consider updating the recommended textbook resources, e.g., Introduction to Financial Accounting (Thomas A & AM Ward) is currently in 9th edition. Similarly, as

some of the textbooks listed in the Business Ethics module (H2022) are quite old (e.g. 1993 and 1990), it should be considered whether more up-to-date textbooks would instead be more suitable.

- Economics & Finance⸺ Highlighted that the BSc in Accounting & Finance programme seems light on Finance, therefore why include Finance in Title? For example, there is no econometrics. Would BSc in Accounting suffice? ACCA may prefer a 50/50 split for both Accounting and Finance, therefore, if one is light it may be appropriate to consider a title such as "BSc in Accounting with Finance".

  Highlighted that the Personal Finance module is very good but needs specific handle/reference to ROS. The Financial Management module could be adapted to an integrated assessment. Generic wording in specified assessment in the Int. Corporate Finance module requires a review to become more specific. The Sustainable Finance module is a good choice for implementing 100% CA.

- Business Management & Personnel Development⸺ It was highlighted that employers desire comprehensive professional development; therefore, this pillar is very useful and displays natural progression in learning contents. The area does allow for innovative assessment and was good to see how these have been handled. There is a need to ensure that the mock interviews, when used, will feel like a real job interview. Critical Skills Development/Skills for Success in HE module should clearly highlight how groupwork will be examined.

  Professional Placement (25 ECTS)⸺ 12–15-week duration is provided but employers desire for ca. 6–9-month (24-36 weeks) for better work experience, allowing for students to excel and where possible gain future employment positions. The placement duration could be extended to say 6 months, by enabling students to take higher number of credits, e.g., up to 40 ECTS credits in the preceding semester (per UCC example).

  Recognising the inherent competition with other institutions and similar programmes, relocation of placement to start in semester 5 could also be considered. Noted that a comprehensive *Work Placement Information Booklet* has been developed, but the module descriptor needs to give a more comprehensive breakdown of the assessment required. Programme team needs to address how to ensure that students are going to get placement as required, e.g., by encouraging students to find own placement. Other critical issues to consider, include (among others):

  (a) management of compliance to ensure students are well protected, e.g., by dealing with paperwork in a timely manner.

  (b) ensuring adequate resourcing to manage compliance.

  (c) ensuring protocols for dealing with any cases of premature withdrawal from placement.

  (d) implementing some form of central control (but possibility of failure also noted), preferably managed by an academic team, and provision of appropriate time allowance to these roles.

  (e) Consistency must be defined for allowable placement period and if payment is expected.

  (f) Does failure of the placement module affect student's award classification? If so, compatible procedures to ensure fair hearing for students should be implemented. If a student is dismissed from placement, then they should not be allowed to redo placement but should instead take the alternative module. Provisions for such a scenario should be outlined in the work placement policy and also clearly communicated to the students.

  (g) The programme also needs to consider how to manage disgruntled students who don't get placement.

- Data Management & Business Intelligence⸺ Noted that the pillar had excellent coverage, e.g., FINTEC. Accounting Information Systems (AIS) offered in Year 4 of study, but programme team should also consider Semester 2 in Year 3, i.e., prior to undertaking Professional Placement. Elective H4022 Banking & Financial Services does not specify repeat assessment. As currently structured, it seems that AIS module has all assessments in week 12, but the panel was made aware that students are assessed on the

integrated use of the packages, hence, formative feedback to individual packages is given on a continuous basis. While the structure of IT modules around MS Access Database is to be complemented, opportunities with SAP University Alliance would be worth considering.

Other considerations under this pillar are: Simulated interviews are innovative and present viable opportunity for industry participation, but career-wise, the possibility of consultancy as a career/role should also be covered in the programme.

Decision of the Panel

The panel recommends validation of the following programmes with Conditions[5] and Recommendations[6]:

Programme title:	Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Accounting & Finance
Programme code:	TU933
Award Title:	Bachelor of Science (Honours)
NFQ level:	8 (240 ECTS credits)

Programme title:	Bachelor of Science in Accounting & Finance
Programme code:	TU788/TU101 (Full Time/Part Time Offer)
Award Title:	Bachelor of Science
NFQ level:	7 (180 ECTS credits)

Programme title:	Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Accounting & Finance
Programme code:	TU208/TU108 (Full Time/Part Time Offer)
Award Title:	Bachelor of Science (Honours)
NFQ level:	8 (60 ECTS credits, *Add-on to TU788/TU101*)

Programme title:	Bachelor of Science in Accounting & Finance
Programme code:	TU201/TU102 (Full Time/Part Time Offer)
Award Title:	Bachelor of Science
NFQ level:	7 (60 ECTS credits, *Add-on*)

Programme title:	Higher Certificate in Accounting & Business
Award Title:	Higher Certificate
NFQ level:	6 (120 ECTS credits, *Exit Award*)

Conditions

The panel recommended the following Conditions to the validation:

1. Pre-requisites and Co-requisites⎯ The Programme Team to review the requirements for Pre-requisites and Co-requisites for all modules. This is to ensure that where any module in advanced stages of the programme builds upon knowledge and skills acquired in foundation and intermediate modules in previous academic year and/or supporting concurrent modules in the same academic year, they are appropriately linked.

2. The Continuous Assessment (CA) strategies in the current module descriptors indicates that students in the two campus locations could potentially be sitting different types of CA. In the interest of consistency across campus locations (and considering that final examinations will be common), all CA associated with equivalent stages of each programme (i.e. for each module) should match in format, number of assessments and weighting. This is not only critical for consistency, but also from a legal point of view (e.g., mark distribution could present problems), and its implementation will enable appropriate use of the assessment matrix that has been devised for the programmes. Subsequently, there will be a need to implement appropriate annual monitoring of performance for the purposes of quality enhancement.

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[5] A condition is an action, which in the opinion of the validation panel, must be undertaken prior to the commencement of the programme. Conditions are mandatory for programme approval.

[6] A recommendation is a proposed action, which in the opinion of the validation panel, must be given serious consideration.

Commendations

The panel expressed the following observations on the proposed programmes and the validation process as worthy of commendation:

1. Panel expressed unanimity that the quality of the documentation received were outstanding and were received in a timely manner, accompanied with all the necessary supporting information. Consequently, there was no requirement for any additional submissions for the purpose of this accreditation.

2. Engagement with the Campus Registrar's Office and academic staff in the programme during the validation process was conducted professionally, and all questions from the panel were openly and comprehensively answered.

3. The handling of the new IT Based Pillar (*Data Management & Business Intelligence*) of the proposed programmes deserved specific commendation. When compared with offerings in equivalent HE institutions, it was a considered opinion that the pillar is innovative and advanced, therefore capable of enhancing the quality of both the student experience and employability perspectives.

4. Preparation of students for placement (Semester 5 Preplacement Module) and professional practice in general is well developed and will have good impact on students, thus ensuring high employability potential. Equally a lot of material covered in the preparation will ensure proficiency in a range of soft skills to produce well-prepared and well-rounded graduates.

5. The panel favourably viewed the inbuilt certifications within programmes, e.g., the programmes offer students the opportunity to obtain Microsoft Office Master Certification. The panel viewed this to be innovative, and will only add to the skills and resources attained by students upon graduation.

6. The initiative by senior management on both campuses towards offering the joint Accounting & Finance programme was a brave and commendable decision and will benefit students in both campus locations.

Recommendations

The Validation Panel recommends that:

1. Programme Team should revisit the title of BSc in Accounting and Finance (not necessarily to change it) to ensure that the final choice will have considered any potential professional body concerns regarding exemptions. Programme team to ensure that there is adequate consultation with all stakeholders as exemptions are a unique selling point for the proposed programmes.

2. If the proposed programmes will be retained as a BSc, then the programme teams must ensure that the designs align with QQI Award Standard for Science Programmes.

3. The wording of the assessment strategy in the Book of Modules should be clear and consistent. This is in reference to the specification surrounding repeat exams and CA and the generic use of, "*Reassessment of this module will consist of a repeat examination. It is possible that there will also be a requirement to be reassessed in a coursework element*". This statement may be unclear depending on module contexts, and therefore may require clarification.

4. Review all modules to ensure that they initially align with the individual campus QA and eventually TU's Marks and Standards under the new quality framework. Specifically, there is a need to harmonise the prescriptions for repeat assessments and the protocols for individually assessed elements of groupwork/teamwork.

5. Ensure that academics receive appropriate time allowances for placement supervision/mentoring, consistent with University policy.

6. There is need to train academic mentors for placement students, and to agree on protocols including provisions of any necessary cpd training as may be required from time-to-time.

7. Review the strategy for placement to enable uptake by as many students as possible. This may necessitate broadening the net of companies (not necessarily confined to accounting firms) and workplace scenarios/organisations considered to satisfy the targeted learning outcomes. Considering that the Accounting and Finance programme is a mature programme (being 20 years old in the Tallaght campus), it is to be expected that some past graduates would now be in senior positions in industry and potentially involved in the recruitment process.

8. Consider establishing an Accounting and Finance alumni programme linking graduates to current students ,for example a mentoring programme. This may also assist in expanding the availability and viability of placements.

9. The panel noted that a significant number of modules in the programmes considered for validation have CA/Examination weighting of 30%/70%. It is understandable that some weightings may be as prescribed by the underlying requirement for exemptions. However, most institutions are moving towards higher weighting for CA in recognition of the inherent scope for innovation in teaching and learning. Therefore, higher waiting of CA element should be considered wherever it does not impact negatively on the exemption criteria.

10. Ensure that module contents are consistently reviewed to accommodate new developments. Invariably some change faster than others, but consistent reviews will enable maintenance of currency of the programmes, e.g., maintaining reading lists up-to-date (the Audit and Assurance module was specifically mentioned).

11. Programme team to ensure that the Book of Modules does not make reference to any specific campus location on pages, but only to TU Dublin where necessary.

Validation Report Sign-off

Chair

_____   _____
Dr Peter Cleary   Date

Secretary

_____   _____
Dr Philip Owende   Date