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MBA in life sciences leadership made available for sector growth in Ireland

A new programme was launched to equip the next generation of leaders in Ireland's growing life sciences sector.



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Paid for by **TU Dublin**



Technological University (TU) Dublin's MBA in Life Sciences Leadership — first in the country — marries business acumen and leadership skills with pharmaceutical expertise to help participants step up to senior roles in the sector.

Life sciences MBA to strengthen leadership

MBA Programme Director Dr Ashley O'Donoghue from the university's Graduate Business School says the motivation for designing the programme specifically for life sciences was to develop business and leadership capabilities that will build on discipline specific expertise.

"It is about giving participants a holistic systems view of managing business — whether in strategy development, finance or managing people," she says. "Organisations promote people to senior leadership levels; but when they get there, they also need to be effective in delivering outside their specialist areas. They need to be a leader; think strategically and critically; manage people and change; and implement strategy. That is what the MBA modules teach our participants."

Complementary modules blend business and technical skills

The course joins the Graduate Business School and School of Chemical and Biopharmaceutical Sciences — led by Professor Declan McCormack — to deliver complementary modules.

Professor McCormack says: "The Graduate Business School provides modules around general leadership and in finance, strategy, planning and development. We

provide complementary modules in leadership and sustainability in life sciences, quality risk management and operational excellence. We also offer insight on current and future regulatory frameworks which are essential for the development of new medicines and therapies."

The MBA Life Sciences Leadership is indicative of the need to provide the blend of business and technical skills that Ireland's biopharmaceutical industries demand. He sees it as: "a fantastic enabler for our graduates to be able to position themselves in key leadership roles."

Fostering socially responsible leaders

Professor McCormack suggests MBA graduates should be well-positioned to undertake a level 10 industry-based PhD. The university has PhD graduates who are now global leaders in life sciences and, as alumni, contribute to the modules and engage in peer coaching.

The part-time MBA course is a two-year programme with semesters and intakes in January and September. It finishes with a consultancy project where students solve real-world issues within their own organisations, consolidating their learning from the different modules.

The course mission is to develop socially responsible leaders with additional themes around sustainability; equality; diversity and inclusion; and wellbeing. This should enable students to lead and transform their organisation with integrity. The University is also making 'strident efforts' to encourage greater female representation at the boardroom level in pharma companies with the TU Dublin Graduate Business

School and Enterprise Academy's 50% scholarship for part-time female students. This is in partnership with the 30% Club.

Early experience and application of modules

Among the first on the course is Siobhán Griffin, a Project Engineer with global pharmaceutical company Astellas. She works in areas of continuous improvement and digital transformation, dealing with cross-functional teams.

With a master's in biopharmaceutical sciences and other qualifications, the MBA caught her eye as she looked for a leadership development programme. Having enrolled in January and already covered economics, financial reporting and marketing, she reveals: "In every module, I have taken away something that fits into my job and role."

Networking and career growth opportunities

Griffin attends online lectures on Friday afternoons and sessions in Dublin every other weekend. She values the opportunity to network with participants from other pharmaceutical companies and hear from external speakers.

She says: "The exposure to the strategic element and leadership development is very important to me. I also see myself developing in terms of soft skills needed in working with cross-functional teams and getting insights into strategy development and implementation."

With her employer contributing towards fees and offering study days, she believes the course will enable her and many others to develop and help the life sciences sector grow.



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