Programme Validation Report

MA in Global Sustainability Leadership

Version of Report	Author	Date
1	Dr. David Irwin	28/03/2024
		Click or tap to enter a date.
		Click or tap to enter a date.
		Click or tap to enter a date.

Approval	Date
Programme Proposal approved by Faculty Board	Click or tap to enter a date.
Programme Proposal approved by University Programmes Board	Click or tap to enter a date.
Programme approved by Faculty Board	Click or tap to enter a date.
Programme approved by University Programmes Board	Click or tap to enter a date.

Section A - Programme Details

Title	MA in Global Sustainability Leadership
NFQ Level	9
ECTS Credits	90
Mode of delivery	Part-time ✓ Full-time
Duration	Part-time: Full-time:
Mode of provision	Face-to-Face Blended Online ✓
Classification of award	Major Award
Discipline Programme Board	Business
Faculty Board	Faculty of Business
Schools involved in delivery	Marketing and Entrepreneurship
Delivery location	On-line
Collaborative Partner (where applicable)	UNITAR
Date of Commencement	September 2024

Section B - Awards

Award Title	MA in Global Sustainability Leadership
NFQ Level	9
Award Class	Major
ECTS Credits	60

Classification of award		
	MARK RANGE	CLASSIFICATION
	70% +	Distinction
	60-69%	Merit Grade 1
	50-59%	Merit Grade 2
	40-49%	Pass

Award (1) Title	Higher Diploma in Sustainability Management
Exit/Embedded	Ext ✓ Embedded ☐
NFQ Level	9
Award Class	Major
ECTS Credits	60
Classification of award	Distinction - 3.25 GPA and above Merit Grade 1 - 3.00 to 3.24 GPA Merit Grade 2 - 2.50 to 2.99 Pass - 2 to 2.49

Exit Award (2)	
Exit/Embedded	Exit ☐ Embedded ☐
NFQ Level	Select Level
Award Class	Choose an item.
ECTS Credits	
Classification of award	

Section C - Programme Derogations (if required)

Derogations from Assessment Regulations/Marks and Standards already approved by University Programmes Board
None

Date of University Programmes Board Approval	Click or tap to enter a date.

Section D   Validation Process

Please tick the process that was followed:

Validation Panel ☐	AQEC Meeting ☐	AQEC Sub-Group ☐
Date: 28th March 2024	Date:	Date:

Panel Members

Name	Role	Affiliation
Dr. Donal O'Brien, Senior Lecturer	Chairperson	Faculty AQEC – TU Dublin
Ali Sheridan	External Member	Director of Major Partnerships @ Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty Initiative
Dr. David Gaul	Internal Member	School of Global Business
Dr. Lorraine Sweeney, Senior Lecturer	Internal Member	School of Management, People and Organisations
Dr. David Irwin	Academic Affairs	TU Dublin

Section E - Programme Evaluation

Governance & Management		
Is the programme designed in accordance with the University's Strategic Plan, Educational Model and Quality Framework?	Yes ✓	No ☐
Comment:		
Will the proposed strategies for programme management and quality assurance ensure that the programme is well managed and continuously enhanced and is in accordance with the University's Quality Framework?	Yes ✓	No ☐

Awards Standards		
Are the programme aims and learning outcomes clearly written using appropriate terminology? (See TU Dublin Guidelines)	Yes ✓	No ☐
Are the programme aims and learning outcomes aligned to the proposed level of the award on the NFQ in accordance with applicable Award Standards?	Yes ✓	No ☐
Will the curricula, teaching, learning and assessment methods enable students to reach the appropriate standard to qualify for the award(s)?	Yes ✓	No ☐

Was the programme development appropriately informed by internal and external stakeholder input (including industry/practice, professional/regulatory bodies, and community organisations)?	Yes ☐	No ☐
Comment: This should be included in the main document and not relegated to an appendix.		
Has the programme been benchmarked against similar programmes nationally and internationally?	Yes ✓	No ☐
Did the programme development take account of relevant external discipline benchmarks and Professional Statutory and Regulatory Body requirements?	Yes ✓	No ☐
Comment: N/A		

Programme Design		
Is the programme design informed by current development in the discipline and associated subject areas, having taken into consideration current trends, stakeholder feedback and market analysis?	Yes ✓	No ☐
Will there be opportunities for students to input into curriculum design decisions in the future?	Yes ✓	No ☐
Comment: This is facilitated through the university's QA/QE processes.		
Is there a mechanism to ensure the input of external stakeholders in the ongoing development of the programme?	Yes ✓	No ☐
Comment: This is facilitated through the university's QA/QE processes.		
Is the programme curriculum well-structured with a logical progression of learning and development across the modules and stages?	Yes ☐	No
- How is the asynchronous aspect of the programme being managed? As this programme is new and innovative it would be important to demonstrate how the learning fora would promote student learning, engagement, and student care and welfare. A specific example would be how the discussion fora will be managed given the fact that multiple learners will access the fora different time given the potential geographical spread of participants on the programme. - The panel has some concerns regarding the placement of the research methods module in relation to the capstone project. Also, the panel would like further detail regarding the supervision arrangements for the capstone project.		

3. There needs to further clarification as to how the third semester is to be presented in line with common understanding of what constitutes a third semester. The panel recommends that the development team consider this in much greater detail. Once an approved approach is agreed and within university expectations of same, that this then be included in the student programme handbook.

Are there appropriate opportunities for students to undertake work-based learning, through work placements or work-based projects or assignments?	Yes ✓	No ☐
Comment: Opportunities to undertake this are possible through assignments in a number of modules as well as through the capstone project.		
If applicable, have the relevant Blended Learning Checklists (i.e. Learning Experience Context & Programme Context) been fully completed and submitted to the Panel?	Yes ☐	No ☐
Comment: The panel recommends that the development team put in place a process as to how the recorded content will be managed and updated (as required) so that it is compliant with GDPR requirements., and the particular nature of subject material and content.		
Is the required programme and module information provided in the correct format?	Yes ✓	No ☐
Comment:		

Learning, Teaching & Assessment		
Is there an effective student-centred teaching and learning strategy that aligns with the University's strategies and Education Model?	Yes ✓	No ☐
Comment: *T*his programme is a fully asynchronous programme. Therefore, there is a greater onus on the programme team to detail how the assessment process will be managed. This includes both on-line and with UNITAR. It would be important to demonstrate, in the documentation, the extent of the expertise and collaborative support the partner will bring to the successful delivery of the programme.		
Does the assessment strategy provide an appropriate mix of assessment types that will enable students to demonstrate that they have met the module and programme learning outcomes?	Yes ✓	No
Comment: The development team might consider providing further detail as to how the on-line group work will be managed to enhance the learner experience.		

Given the diverse student cohort additional approaches to learning would be an enhanced feature of the learning experience and would help to engage peer support, networking and connections among learners.

To this end the development team might consider producing an assessment matrix which demonstrates to learners a realistic calendar, the alignment of assessments to meet programme learning outcomes, and the identification of potential bottlenecks, and workload expectations.

Do the learning outcomes and assessment strategy ensure that academic integrity can be maintained and attempted breaches of academic integrity are minimised/easily detected?	Yes ✓	No ☐
Comment:		
Is there a comprehensive mapping of assessment methods and module learning outcomes and between module learning outcomes and programme learning outcomes?	Yes ✓	No ☐
Comment: The panel recommends inclusion of this is programme documentation and student handbook(s).		
Are there opportunities in all modules to provide students with timely and constructive feedback on their learning and development?	Yes ✓	No ☐
Comment: Because of the on-line nature of the programme, the panel recommends that the development team include further narrative of the process of how this will be managed. The capstone project supervision needs further clarification so that the expectations and needs of learners can be met.		
Do the teaching and assessment methods consider the diversity of the student cohort?	Yes ✓	No ☐
Comment: UNITAR has much experience and it would be important that this learning informs the development team's approach to teaching and assessment methods to consider the diversity of the student cohort. The fact that there are two programme chairs it is important to spell out how this working relationship will be structured and operate to support learners and the efficient management of the programme.		

Student Supports & Learning Environment		
Are there sufficient and appropriate resources (e.g. human, financial and physical) to support the proposed programme aims and objectives, to deliver the programme as specified?	Yes ✓	No ☐
Comment:		

Are there sufficient staff that are appropriately qualified and capable to support the programme delivery, from both context and pedagogy perspectives?	Yes ✓	No ☐
Comment: Given that this is the first time the School is delivering a programme exclusively on-line it would be important that there is adequate succession planning so that institutional memory is not lost as a result of this innovation.		
Are there appropriate arrangements in place to support the student experience and to monitor student performance?	Yes ✓	No ☐
Comment: This is facilitated through the university's QA/QE processes.		
Are the access, transfer and progression arrangements clearly defined and appropriate, and aligned to TU Dublin policy/strategy in this regard?	Yes ✓	No ☐
Comment:		
Do the student supports and learning environment cater for equality, diversity and inclusivity of students?	Yes ✓	No ☐
Comment:		
Is the relevant programme information clearly communicated to the students to ensure they are informed, guided and cared for?	Yes ✓	No ☐
The learning outcomes for the research methods are different from other modules. The phrasing and terminology needs to be consistent with other modules.		
Has the Checklist for First Year Student Success (where applicable) been fully completed and submitted to the Panel?	Yes ☐	No ☐
Comment: N/A		

Collaborative Provision (if applicable)		
Are the roles and responsibilities of each partner clearly defined?	Yes ✓	No ☐
Comment: Due diligence has been completed and approved by the Partnerships Office.		
In the case of Joint or Multiple Awards, has due diligence on capacity of partner institution meeting the QA-QE requirements for the programme been undertaken?	Yes ☐	No ☐
Comment: TU Dublin is the awarding body for this programme.		

Section F - Overall Recommendation

1.	**Recommend approval of programme as submitted, without amendment**	☐
2.	**Recommend approval of programme, subject to minor amendments/editorial changes to be completed as soon as possible and with recommendations for consideration.** **Note:** recommendations are attached where it is considered that the programme would benefit from particular changes, or from a review of certain aspects of the programme over a period of time, with changes made if required. While recommendations are advisory in nature, there is an expectation that all recommendations are responded to appropriately and acted upon as appropriate.	☒
3.	**Recommend approval of programme subject to the fulfilment of conditions. Recommendations for consideration may also be attached.** **Note:** conditions are attached where it is agreed that changes must be made to the programme / programme documentation prior to the commencement of the programme. Conditions must be set where issues are identified that relate directly to academic standards or to University regulations or procedures. It should be clear what is required in order to meet the conditions. A new programme cannot go forward to Faculty Board for consideration/approval unless a response to the Validation Report is submitted with revised programme documentation and the Academic Quality Enhancement Committee is satisfied that all conditions are met.	☐
4.	**Do not recommend approval of programme.**	☐

Areas for commendation	
1.	The degree of innovation in designing and developing the programme in a highly relevant and sought after area.
2.	The strategic partnership with UNITAR
3.	

Recommendations	
1.	The document maps the relevant PLOs and MLOs. The assessments need to be mapped better to present an overall and coherent matrix of assessment. This is important to avoid the pitfalls associated with over-assessment and promotes better management by students of their learning. This will also assist the development team to develop appropriate timelines for setting and submission of assessments.
	Response: The assessment structure and weightings are common across modules. To avoid overassessment, students are only required to complete one individual assessment piece and to contribute to one group assessment in each module. An assessment column has been added to table 4 in the student handbook illustrating a typical teaching and assessment schedule for a Semester. Assessments are integrated into interactive activities within many modules, for example facilitating discussions in discussion forums. Assessment deadlines and delivery are staggered across the semester to enable students to manage workloads.
2.	The development team needs to reconsider the inclusion of a "third semester" in terms of practical arrangements for supervisory management and advice to students. On this point the semester structure needs to be
	Response: The applied project was not well articulated in the documents, and we have now removed the third semester. The Applied Project is embedded in the programme and this is now better reflected and clearly articulated in the student handbook, and in the applied project handbook.
3.	The development team needs to consider the management of the capstone project and the timing of the research methods module. To do this it would be extremely helpful if a handbook for the capstone project could be produced. It should also include information on the submission of a dissertation using an appropriate, consistent, and agreed house style. The timing of the research methods module needs to be explicitly clear and timely. For example, when are they getting feedback on their approach, and methodology in terms of content. Also, there needs to be robust signposts on when they submit the proposal, when they get feedback, especially if the delivery of the module is presented throughout the second year rather than in a third semester as presented in the documentation.
	Response: We have produced an Applied Project handbook, outlining all the details suggested here.

4.	It would be helpful that School and partner meet each semester to share learnings and areas for enhancement once the programme has commenced.
	Response: UNITAR and TU Dublin programme teams currently meet on a regular basis, and this will continue throughout the delivery of the programme. The programme has been developed collaboratively over the past two years and the UNITAR and TU Dublin teams have an excellent working relationship.
5.	The panel would recommend that the development team ensure that they are complaint with university regulations regarding the granting of permission to the partner to deliver on the university's VLE. Alternatively, the development team may wish to explore the capacity of the partner to deliver the modules for which it is responsible on its VLE. The development team should ensure that it has the appropriate data analytics to ensure that student access to resources and participation in classes and other learning events can be measured accurately. This data can be obtained from the VLE's own data analytics functions.
	Response: The LOA between UNITAR and TU Dublin allows for use of our VLE by UNITAR experts for programme delivery. This agreement was approved after careful consideration by the legal teams on both sides, approved by the partnerships office, and signed by both parties. Access has already been approved and logins provided to UNITAR experts delivering on year 1 of the MA. Using a single VLE is an important for smooth, simplified delivery online, ensuring a positive student experience. Student access data from Brightspace will be utilised and monitored by lecturers throughout the semester to measure engagement. Where students are not engaging this will be followed up in the first instance by the lecturer. Programme chairs will subsequently meet with students if required.
6.	Given the potential diversity of the learners on this programme and the unique on-line delivery, it is important that the team outline how the group will be managed in terms of student care.
	Response: The programme team recognises that managing a diverse group of students in an online program is a complex task that requires a thoughtful and inclusive approach. From the early stages of the co-design and co-development processes of this master programme the team was committed to embed a human centred approach to all programme dimensions, in a sense the human centred approach works both as rationale and methodology. The human-centred approach ensures student care. This approach recognizes that each student is unique, with different learning styles and paces. The course develops leaders in sustainability, peacebuilding, conflict resolution, and champions of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), empowering students and nurturing personal qualities such as empathy, independence, creativity, self-reflection, and adaptability. The programme is unique in the global education market, with an innovative teaching and learning approach and a diverse global lecturing team, ensuring that the content is inclusive and respectful to all cultures. The SDGs are embedded in all modules of the programme,

facilitating students to develop their disruptive thinking. This interdisciplinary approach emphasizes leadership and entrepreneurial solutions to achieve the UN 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, reflecting the human-centred principle of shaping around each individual and considering the science of how and when deep learning happens.

Both TU Dublin and UNITAR will regularly check in with students to understand their challenges and provide necessary support through surveys, one-on-one meetings, or group discussions. They will maintain clear and open communication, ensuring students know who to contact if they have questions or concerns, and how and when they can reach out.

They will foster a sense of community among the students through group projects, discussion forums, and social events. Recognizing that online learning can sometimes be isolating, they will provide resources for mental health support. In essence, the programme puts the student at the centre of the learning process, tailoring the educational experience to their unique needs and capabilities. It creates an environment that fosters growth, creativity, and personal development. It recognizes and respects the individuality of each student, providing them with the tools and support they need to succeed. It will empower students to take charge of their own learning, helping them to realize their full potential. By doing so, it will create a learning experience that is meaningful, engaging, and transformative, putting the human at the centre of the learning process.

This approach ensures that students flourish both personally, academically, and professionally through their training experience. The human-centred approach guarantees that the students have robust support mechanisms in place and are cared for at all times by the programme team.

The specific details of how the student experience will be managed with a human centred approach that prioritises student care are outlined in response 7 below.

7.	The team should provide more details on how the online delivery will operate. To this end the development team should publish documentation the touchpoints of how the student experience will be managed in practical terms. For example, peer learning, student orientation, and the management of discussion for a given the asynchronous nature of the learning experience.
	Response: The student experience is designed to be comprehensive, supporting engagement, learning, and collaboration while accommodating the asynchronous nature of the online environment. We have added a section on the student experience to the student handbook. The details on the various touchpoints of how the student experience is managed practically are also outlined below: 1. Student Orientation Week (Week 1 of Semester 1): The first week is dedicated to introducing students to the program and its objectives. They receive academic induction alongside an overview of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This orientation ensures that all students have a foundational understanding of the program's focus and goals and navigate through the challenges and opportunities of an exclusively online, mostly asynchronous programme. 2. Engagement with International Experts: Throughout the program, students attend seminars conducted by international experts in different areas of sustainability. These seminars expose students to diverse perspectives and real-world applications of sustainability principles,

enriching their learning experience, while allowing for connection, a core aspect of the human centred approach adopted by the programme team.

3. Sulitest Assessment: At the end of the first week, students take the Sulitest to gauge their sustainability literacy and awareness of the SDGs' progress. This assessment provides valuable feedback to students and instructors, informing areas of improvement and highlighting strengths.

4. Learning Platform (Brightspace): The program utilizes a dedicated online learning platform (Brightspace) to facilitate interactions between staff and students. This platform serves as a central hub for course materials, online classes, web-based resources, discussion forums, and communication of key events and timetabling information.

5. Peer Learning: Despite the asynchronous nature of the program, peer learning is facilitated through various means, such as online discussion forums on Brightspace. These forums enable students to engage with each other, share insights, discuss course content, and collaborate on group projects.

6. Rules for online engagement: detailed rules on respectful online interaction are provided in the student handbook and will be outlined to students during orientation week. Lecturers will monitor discussion forums and students will be made aware of complaints procedures for disrespectful exchanges.

7. Lecturer Support: Lecturers provide guidance and support throughout the program, offering detailed information on specific teaching and engagement activities each week. They will also conduct at least two online classes (synchronous moments) in a schedule that is more suitable to accommodate many time zones and have weekly virtual office hours to address student queries and provide further clarification on course materials.

8. Virtual coffees: In addition to formal learning activities, virtual coffees will serve as informal opportunities for students to connect, network, and build community in the online environment. These virtual gatherings, will provide a more informal setting for students to engage in casual conversations, share experiences, and exchange ideas outside of the structured curriculum. Virtual coffees will be organized both by the programme chairs and faculty members but also by student leaders, shall they wish. Virtual coffees' topics will range from current events and sustainability initiatives to career aspirations and personal interests. By fostering a sense of belonging and camaraderie among students, the virtual coffees will contribute to a vibrant and supportive learning community, enhancing the overall student experience and promoting collaboration and peer learning. These informal interactions will complement the formal aspects of the program, as well as its core human centred approach, enriching students' educational journey and strengthening their connections with their peers and mentors.

9. Common Assessment Structure: All modules follow a common assessment structure, which includes both individual assignments and group projects. This ensures consistency across modules and allows students to develop essential skills through varied assessment methods, making sure that they do not need to navigate through different requirements or different presentations of content or assessments in the online platform.

10. Staggered Submission Dates: Submission dates for group assessments are coordinated and staggered throughout the semester, allowing students to manage their workload effectively

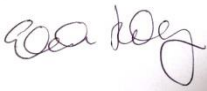|	and collaborate with their peers, regardless of different time zones and through the online and virtual mediums that they deem fit to their needs. Similarly, individual assignment submission dates are staggered over a three-week assessment period, providing flexibility and accommodating different learning styles and an intuitive and user friendly submission space in the platform.

Conditions of Approval	
1.	
	Response:
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

Other matters to be brought to the attention of Faculty Board and/or University Programmes Board	
1.	
	Response:
7.	

Response:	

8.	
Response:	

9.	
Response:	

Section G - Approvals

Validation Report	
This report has been agreed by the Validation Panel and is signed on their behalf by the chairperson.	
Chairperson: Dr. Donal O'Brien	
Signed:	Date:

School Response	
The response to the conditions and recommendations has been agreed by the School and is signed by the Head of School.	
Head of School: Dr. Etain Kidney	
Signed:	Date: 13.5.24

Faculty Board	
The report and response have been approved by Faculty Board	
Vice-Dean for Education: Dr. Roisin Donnelly (Acting)	
Signed: Dr. Eoin Langan (by Faculty Board's Chair's Action Dean , Faculty of Business & Chair of Faculty board	Date: 14.05.24

University Programmes Board (Programmes of 30 ECTS or great)	
The report and response have been approved by the University Programmes Board	
Registrar: Dr. Mary Meaney	
Signed:	Date: Click or tap to enter a date.