



SOUTH EAST TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY

COURSE EVALUATION 2

ASSESSORS' REPORT TO ACADEMIC COUNCIL

COURSE EVALUATED: Master of Science in Organic and Biological Horticulture (NFQ Level 9, Major Award, 90 Credits)

Postgraduate Diploma in Science in Organic and Biological Horticulture (NFQ Level 9, Major Award, 60 Credits)

Certificate in Management Practices for Biodiversity in Landscape Horticulture (NFQ Level 9, Minor Award, 10 Credits)

Certificate in Protected Crop Production in Organic and Biological Horticulture (NFQ Level 9, Minor Award, 10 Credits)

Certificate in Crop Management in Organic and Biological Horticulture (NFQ Level 9, Minor Award, 10 Credits)

SCHOOL: Science and Computing

DEPARTMENT: Land Sciences

1. INTRODUCTION

The following is a review report to Academic Council from the panel of assessors on the proposal from the School of Science and Computing at South East Technological University to develop a Master of Science in Organic and Biological Horticulture (NFQ Level 9; 90 Credits); a Postgraduate Diploma in Science in Organic and Biological Horticulture (NFQ Level 9; 60 Credits); and associated Minor Awards – Certificate in Management Practices for Biodiversity in Landscape Horticulture (NFQ Level 9; 10 Credits); Certificate in Protected Crop Production in Organic and Biological Horticulture (NFQ Level 9; 10 Credits); Certificate in Crop Management in Organic and Biological Horticulture (NFQ Level 9; 10 Credits). In accordance with the regulations governing the evaluation of new programme proposals, as set out in the South East Technological University *Programme Quality Assurance Enhancement Policy and Procedures*, the programme proposal was reviewed by a panel of assessors.

The panel of assessors who contributed to this report were:

- Prof Eithne Guilfoyle, Former Vice President for Academic Affairs (Registrar), Dublin City University (Chair)
- Mags Coughlan, Head Gardener, Ballymaloe Organic Kitchen Garden, Shanagarry. Co. Cork
- David Currid, Grantstown Nurseries Ltd, Ballygunner, Waterford
- Dr Suzanne Denieffe, South East Technological University Academic Council Representative
- Prof Mary Forrest, Emeritus Associate Professor, School of Agriculture and Food Science, University College Dublin
- Dr Siobhán Jordan, Head of Department of Agriculture, Food & Animal Health, Dundalk Institute of Technology
- Dr Colette Moloney, Assistant Registrar, South East Technological University Waterford
- Alánna O'Brien, Student Representative, University of Galway

In accordance with the regulations set out in the aforementioned *Programme Quality Assurance Enhancement Policy and Procedures*, a review meeting took place on 5 March 2024. The review meeting was conducted virtually via Teams. Dr Suzanne Denieffe was unable to attend

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the review meeting but contributed via email. In the course of the meeting, the panel of assessors met with the programme development team. The following members of the South East Technological University (SETU) team were present:

- Prof Peter McLoughlin, Head of School of Science and Computing, South East Technological University Waterford
- Eleanor Kent, Head of Department of Land Sciences, SETU Waterford
- Eoghan Curran, Lecturer, Department of Land Sciences, SETU Waterford
- Dr Cara Daly, Lecturer, Department of Land Sciences, SETU Waterford
- John Geraghty, Lecturer, Department of Land Sciences, SETU Waterford
- Yvonne Grace, Lecturer, Department of Land Sciences, SETU Waterford

The assessors wish to thank the members of the development team for engaging generously and openly with the review process.

2. SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONDITIONS

2.1 General Remarks

The panel commends the School on proposing a programme to meet the current training needs, particularly the skills development requirements, of the sector. In addition, the panel welcomes the articulation of the Sustainable Development Goals on which the programme proposes to deliver. The panel recommends approval of the **Master of Science in Organic and Biological Horticulture** (NFQ Level 9; 90 Credits); the **Postgraduate Diploma in Science in Organic and Biological Horticulture** (NFQ Level 9; 60 Credits); and associated Minor Awards – **Certificate in Management Practices for Biodiversity in Landscape Horticulture** (NFQ Level 9; 10 Credits); **Certificate in Protected Crop Production in Organic and Biological Horticulture** (NFQ Level 9; 10 Credits); **Certificate in Crop Management in Organic and Biological Horticulture** (NFQ Level 9; 10 Credits) – until the next School Review in the School of Science and Computing. **Approval is conditional on the submission of a revised programme document that takes account of the conditions and recommendations outlined below; and the submission of a summary document describing the responses and actions of the School to address the conditions and recommendations made by the review panel.**

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Areas for attention have been emboldened in the text for convenience of reference. Action is required on items marked 'Conditions' and such action is mandatory if the programme is to be approved; action is highly recommended on items marked 'Recommendations'.

2.2 Conditions

- **The School should review the 12 hours Online Research proposed as part of the 'Food, Health and Nutrition' module.** The description of the activity as online research and the allocation of 12 hours of lecturer contact to same did not appear to match the description of the nature of the proposed activity at the panel meeting. **The module descriptor should be amended to better capture the intended activity and provide clarity on same for learners.**
- **The School should review the proposal document for typographical errors and inconsistencies, in particular inconsistencies between the module descriptors and proposed programme schedules in the areas of module assessment and contact. The programme learning outcomes should be mapped to the SETU or Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) Award Standards, as appropriate, rather than the WIT Award Standards. The proposal should be reviewed to ensure that the title of the module 'Research Methods and Dissertation' is stated correctly and consistently throughout the document. The CE1 Report, included in the document, should be removed as is not relevant.**

2.3 Recommendations

- In discussion with the panel re the assessment strategy, the team proposed that one of the parameters set for assessment design was that assessment should provide the learners with something tangible which would be useful to them in the future. **The panel was impressed by this approach to assessment and believe that a discussion on this framework for assessment would enhance the document.**
- The volume of assessment appears high in individual modules. **The School should keep the volume of assessment under review and consider introducing shared assessments across modules to reduce the assessment load for learners, particularly given that the programme is aimed at a part-time learner cohort.**

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- The panel commend the School on the proposed induction for learners with non-cognate qualifications. **In addition, the panel recommends that the School provide a list of introductory reading material, to supplement the more advanced reading lists included on module descriptors, to allow learners coming from other disciplines an opportunity to become familiar with the field.**
- Exposure of learners to current European developments in the sector is paramount to the success of the programme. **The School should consider how funding could be sourced to allow learners to undertake fieldtrips in Europe or, in the absence of physical fieldtrips, how virtual fieldtrips to European sites could be facilitated.**
- While the team discussed the schedule for delivery of the programme at the panel meeting, this information is not available in the document. **The programme document should be revised to include a proposed programme delivery schedule as a guide to learners on the commitment involved and the type of delivery to expect.**
- **The School should reconsider the high level of contact teaching hours in the modules, and the pedagogical basis for these hours, bearing in mind that the programme is at NFQ Level 9 and aimed at part-time learners.**
- One of the strengths of the programme is the access that learners have to library and laboratory resources, and the School's links with industry. **The School should revise the programme document to more clearly articulate the availability of these resources, and the nature of same.**
- At the next opportunity to review, the School should reconsider the module learning outcomes for the module 'Project Management and Marketing' to ensure that the finance-specific skills and knowledge obtained by learners are more clearly identified.

Signed:

Prof Eithne Guilfoyle (Chair)

Date:
