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Rethinking core curriculum design in an Undergraduate Business and Management Programme in a Technological University in Ireland

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Abstract

This presentation will share current design thinking on a longstanding, highly regarded undergraduate programme in Business and Management in a Technological University in Ireland. Technological universities offer programmes that are vocationally and professionally oriented. The 4-year programme has remained consistently popular with students throughout the life cycle of recruitment, orientation, delivery and performance. There is a strong legacy in case teaching and inquiry learning in this programme. This is evidenced through group discussion and solving of complex problems, and current case studies facilitate development of the higher levels of cognitive, interdisciplinary learning. They are used to highlight connections between specific academic topics and international real-world business and societal issues. The latter is fundamental for the range of international case competitions that teams of students engage with across the academic year.

It is widely recognized that in this period of post-pandemic higher education, students' engagement and attendance in their programmes has been challenged. This is not a localized issue to a single University - many other Irish and International institutions are also facing this challenge. Given the reach of this issue, this well-regarded Business and Management programme has not remained impervious, and in 2024 the Faculty has embarked on School and Programmatic Reviews. This reflective self-evaluation has facilitated an opportunity to conduct research and rethink aspects to look at what this means for the programme and how best to address it for the future. Areas that will be discussed are the potential introduction of a new business consultancy theme to the programme offering students a unique opportunity to gain practical experience working with real clients on real projects, and a new case study stream of core and common modules in the introductory years. The underpinning educational theory and approach of the new business consultancy is action-based learning where the students can put the theory they learn during class into action, working with guidance from experienced industry professionals and managers. They can receive one-to-one guidance and support from managers, enabling them to develop confidence both personally and professionally. Being linked to a strong global alumni community can provide them with the opportunity to network and seek mentorship, equipping them with tools to build their own career path once leaving the programme.

Taking all this into account, the aim of the design thinking approach is to consolidate what has been working well over previous years, to continue to integrate relevant business simulation technologies, and to explore specialist themes in a flexible programme design for the future.