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UEM Guiding Principle 3 (Diversity of provision & focus on practice)

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UEM Essentials

Guiding Principle

3

At a glance

Guiding Principle 3

Distinguished by diversity of provision and focus on practice and career development

Make full use of apprenticeship and skills-based learning approaches in a continuum from Level 6 to Level 10 awards on the National Qualifications Framework.

Focus on practice, experiential learning and career development using a range of learning preferences and experiences that differentiate TU Dublin from other universities.

DISTINGUISHED BY DIVERSITY OF PROVISION & FOCUS ON PRACTICE & CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Technological University Dublin (TU Dublin) offers a diversity of provision through an extensive range of apprenticeship, undergraduate and postgraduate programmes across five faculties. TU Dublin is distinguished by its commitment to providing an excellent student experience, its strong industry partnerships, and its research excellence with a particular focus on practice and career development.

The Strategic Intent (2020) highlights the core strengths of TU Dublin with a focus on practice-based learning underpinned by a research-informed approach to teaching that helps to differentiate it from the more traditional universities. This approach and diversity of provision are underpinned by alignment with the [National Qualifications Framework](#) which supports the provision of flexible learning pathways and pathways from Further Education (FE) to Higher Education (HE) and also aligns with the lifelong learning ambitions of all learners.

FOR MORE INFO

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INTRODUCTION

Two broad themes underpin Guiding Principle 3; diversity of provision and a focus on practice-based learning that prepares learners for their future and their career development. Diversity of provision is seen as key to offering learners a wide range of opportunities to gain the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in meeting their goals. Additionally, a university can cater to the needs of a more diverse range of students by offering a variety of options, through module selection, flexible pathways, and agile timetables, across academic disciplines.

This approach endeavours to create a more inclusive learning environment and one where all our students experience belonging in higher education. In addition, both well-defined and established pathways, as well as more flexible learning pathways for all learners including clear pathways from Further Education (FE) to Higher Education (HE) are accommodated by this approach. The requirement for flexibility and diversity of provision is supported by the National Qualification Framework (NQF) which [provides a structure](#) for skills-based learning from Level 6 to Level 10.

The ever-changing nature of the world of work, coupled with the increasing importance of practical based skills and knowledge, is driven by both industry and society's needs. van Woetik et al., (2020, p. 140) define practice-based education as *“learning from experience in the real world”, which means that students spend time in genuine professional environments.*”

RELEVANCE TO THE UEM

Distinguished by a diversity of provision and focus on practice and career development is one of the Ten Guiding Principles that form the foundation of the [University Education Model](#) (UEM). In addition, it is embedded within the UEM [“Framework of Learning Experiences”](#) and underpins two key priorities, flexible learning pathways, and progression opportunities for FE to HE.

Despite an increasing focus on practice-based, research-informed approaches to learning, this is not a new concept,

“areas such as medicine, education, and social work have included work-based learning as central elements in their programmes for many years”

(Linehan, 2008, p. 15).

Examples of established practice-based approaches include work experience, placements, internships, or other practice-based activities. These approaches aim to help learners understand and prepare for the workplace and strengthen employability. [Boud \(2019\)](#) sets out three reasons why this shift in focus is of benefit;

1. To equip students with more knowledge without applying it to real problems in authentic contexts is reaching its limits.
2. People rarely work as isolated individuals judged only on what they do independently of others, which is often in contrast to the norm in educational settings.
3. It is more useful to view the world in terms of the practices that make it up rather than the individual attributes of those who practice.

Building on these reasons, the acquisition of cross-disciplinary skills and competencies such as complex problem solving, critical thinking and creativity will not only support the career development of learners, it will also develop a strong commitment to social responsibility through engagement with local and international communities.

In terms of the TU Dublin UEM [“Framework of Learning Experiences,”](#) it provides a focus on one of the three learning experience threads; **authentic**. These learning experiences are grounded in authentic experiences, enabled by authentic teaching, authentic assessment, and authentic feedback underpinned by collaboration with graduate, employer and community groups (alliance learning).

These learning experiences require the application of critical inquiry leading to the construction of knowledge, the solution of complex problems, and the production, and reflection, of meaningful real-life practices. This approach will promote meaningful learning experiences, foster continuous inquiry, and enable interdisciplinarity and alliance learning with purposeful assessment and empowering feedback as part of a supportive and scaffolded learning

EMERGENT PERSPECTIVES

Embedding micro-credentials are one example to support the learners, by providing learning opportunities before, during and after higher education studies. This approach bolsters flexible learning pathways, widening access to higher education, diversifying lifelong learning provision and providing collaborative opportunities with industry and community groups.

The National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, in exploring assessment through a workplace setting, stated that learning from experience has always been a fundamental aspect of

journey. An identified experience in this thread is “negotiated work-based learning” experience whereby learners design their own work-based learning experience and can include such aspects as social activism and entrepreneurial endeavour. The potential to link to a graduate mentoring scheme will support this and other elements of the authentic strand. Including other stakeholders like employers, enables a transdisciplinary learning experience.

higher education, “Engagement with real-life scenarios and authentic experiences can support student learning. Having work experience (or work-integrated learning) embedded in or occurring in parallel with higher education programmes supports an experiential approach to learning.” (National Forum, 2017)

With this Guiding Principle in mind there are a variety of examples currently in practice in TU Dublin, below are two examples; TU Dublin’s Learn and Work Course and Sustainable Innovators for Enterprise (SIE) a TU Dublin pan-University initiative.



Learn+Work

A professional traineeship course providing a pipeline of skilled, in-demand work-ready talent through industry partnership. Learn+Work blends the strength of a university education with an apprenticeship-style work placement. This course is designed specifically to create work-ready university graduates in the shortest possible time frame. Each year Learn+Work students spend five months in full-time study and then seven months on placement with a company four days per week, returning to university one day per week during term time.

SIE (Sustainable Innovators for Enterprise)

A pan-University initiative supported by Convene. The programme is designed to simulate a globally-connected, enterprise-driven second or third-year work placement or internship. SIE reimagines the traditional placement and brings enterprise and students together in a structured way. Exposure to innovative technologies and workshops in future-proofing skills such as Cultural Intelligence (CQ), Human-Centred Design, and Creativity, support students in their innovations for enterprise. The SIE experience provides students with a unique differentiator and boosts their employability in the longer term.

Find out more about the [University Education Model \(UEM\) @ TU Dublin Intranet](#)

As part of the data analysis following [UEM socialisation](#), the theme of Graduate Employability emerged encompassing the concepts of Career-focused experiences, knowledge and skills (including Authentic Assessment), Engaged learning experiences, and Achievement and Recognition. The theme included a very clear call for our learners to find meaningful employment following their learning path in TU Dublin, summarised succinctly by the quote: “Initially and primarily a good job” is what learners expect from Higher Education [UEM Socialisation Data Code 141]. Lester & Costley (2010, p. 562) reiterate this while also acknowledging that “the view of professional practitioners as being trained to apply a relatively well-defined body of knowledge and skills to technical or business problems appears increasingly out-of-date.” Echoing this Guiding Principle, Boud (2019) suggests that we need to consider what a fully embedded approach to a practice-based programme would look like in an area of need, highlighting that “the last place to start is by looking at existing courses.”

CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE

Some challenging questions to reflect on when considering this Guiding Principle are:

- How might we make full use of the module portfolio to support a diversity of provision that is accessible?
- How might we focus on practice, experiential learning and career development?
- How might we tailor our pedagogical approach to support a focus on practice and career development?
- How might we make full use of apprenticeship and skills-based learning approaches in a continuum from apprenticeship to Phd?

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