



Industry-based Practitioner Tutor engagement process in TUS

Case Study of engaging full-time Industry Practitioner Tutors in the development and delivery of an online part-time postgraduate diploma for work-based learners.

Jim Dooley, TUS

Greg Larkin, UL

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1 Context

1.1 The REAP Project

The REAP project (funded under the 2018 HEA Innovation and Transformation call), is a University of Limerick (UL) / Technological University of the Shannon (TUS) / Mary Immaculate College (MIC) higher education strategic institutional partnership to develop a best practice framework in the engagement and governance of external/practitioner tutors delivering blended/online professional education programmes, and the development of targeted upskilling to improve the quality of teaching by external tutors in online delivery methods.

1.2 The practitioner/external tutor

In the REAP context, the “practitioner/external tutor” is the experienced industry, professional services or public sector subject-matter expert who is contracted part-time by the HEI, to develop and/or deliver modules for flexible/online professional education programmes.

2 Purpose

This report outlines the drivers and the process undertaken to engage full-time Industry Practitioners at TUS, in the development and delivery of a fully online part-time postgraduate diploma for work-based learners. The report complements a paper delivered on the topic at the EADTU conference in Bari, Italy on 4 November 2021 by Dr Phil Hennessy, Department Head Flexible Learning TUS and REAP project colleagues.

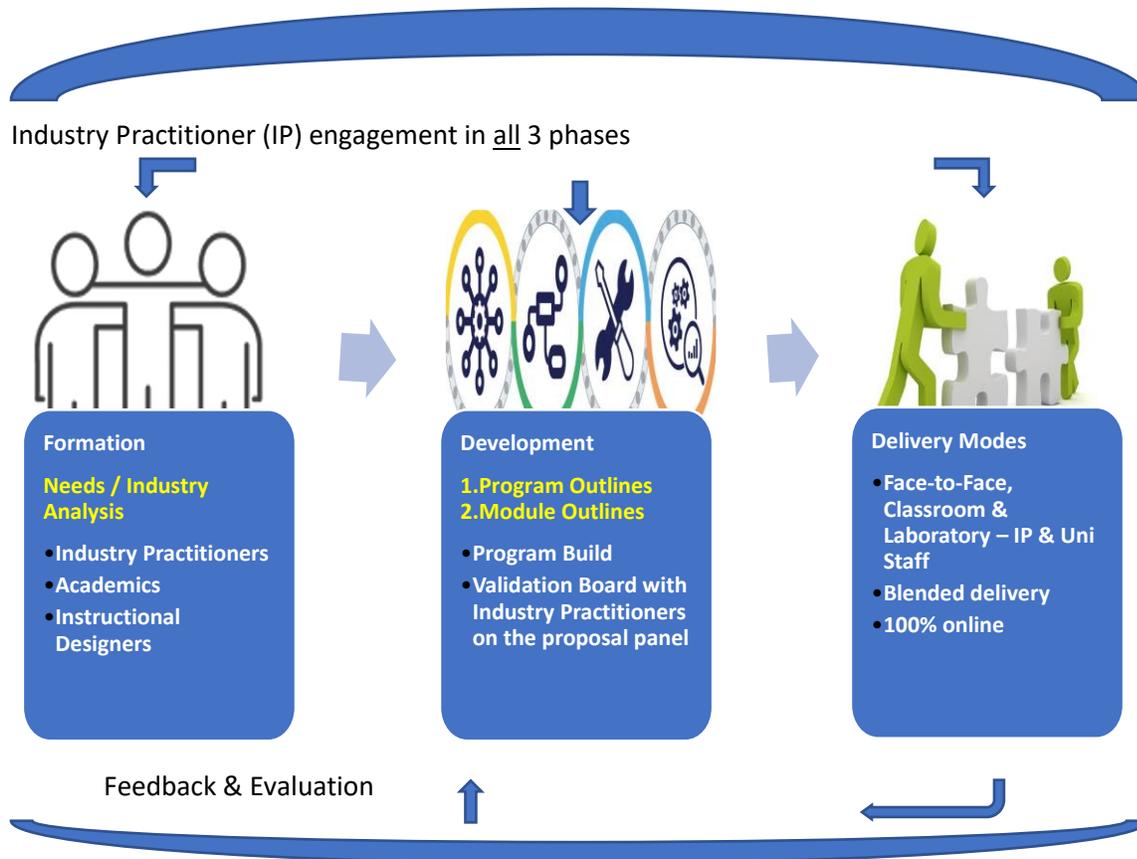
The objective of the report is to serve as a template or guide, aimed at academic programme leaders, who are planning for engaging Industry Practitioners to develop and deliver modules on postgraduate programmes for work-based learners.

The report documents the engagement process, the timelines associated with each stage, the issues encountered and recommendations on how this process can be improved.

3 Scope

As a case study, the following Mapping Flowchart illustrates the dynamics of engagement with Industry Practitioners in the conception and formation, design and delivery of a University postgraduate Diploma in Science in Process Validation and Regulatory Affairs at TUS in 2021.

3.1 Mapping the engagement process



How Industry can define requirements for new programmes or modules

3.2 Target Programme Details

The programme developed by the industry-based practitioner tutors was the Online Level 9 Taught, Postgraduate Diploma in Process Validation and Regulatory Affairs (Medical).

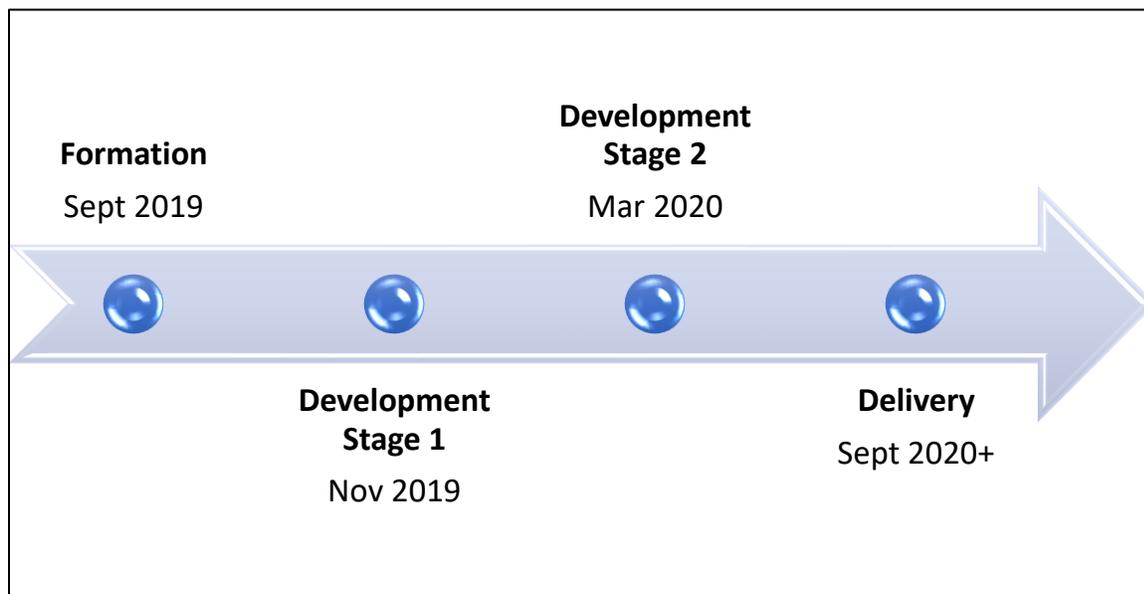
[TUS | Postgraduate Diploma in Science in Process Validation and Regulatory Affairs \(Medical\) \(lit.ie\)](https://www.tus.ie/postgraduate/diploma-in-science-in-process-validation-and-regulatory-affairs-medical/)

- 60 credits, 6 modules, 10 credits each.
- Programme run over 15 months, 3 semesters, 2 modules per semester.

This Graduate Diploma of Science is delivered on line and designed as an innovative multi-tiered programme to address the needs and requirements of industry-based learners and making education more accessible. It is designed so that learners can opt to select the module streams individually as Special Purpose Awards (six), complete three of the module streams to attain a Level 9 Graduate Diploma or opt for the Level 9 Masters of Science (from TUS web page).

4 Stages in the engagement process

4.1 Timeline



4.2 Programme Team Formation

Sept 2019 – Nov 2019

- Through a series of Conferences, Seminars and casual discussions, various Industry Practitioners expressed interested in engagement with University teaching staff over a period of years prior to the initiation of the programme.
- From Sept 2019 over a 3-month period, University staff, primarily being the Course Co-ordinator, makes approaches to four Industry Practitioners, all of whom are Scientists employed within large Pharma based businesses.
- A single team of Industry Practitioners and University staff is formed and conduct a series of online discussions. Meetings are conducted primarily online. The working group consist of a TUS Programme Co-ordinator, four Industry Practitioners and one Educational Technologist
- Outcome - the working party is offered sessional staff contracts of 72 hours each. Course resources are pooled and documentation of the course is initiated.

4.3 Development

4.3.1 Program Design

Nov 2019 – Feb 2020

- Led by the University programme Co-ordinator, a University Course development template document is distributed to all stakeholders. Previously verified similar program documents are all assembled.
- Tasks assigned as to whom is to contribute what elements to the program document. Each Industry Practitioner develops one or two modules under the direction of the Programme Leader who leads each module and an Education Technologist who also builds the online tools.
- A University Education Technologist is engaged with the team who will guide and assist Industry Practitioners in designing VLE environments and the tools available to deliver content online.
- Outcomes - Course objectives are determined and a timeline is drafted. An initial draft of a course is outlined using the TUS Course Developer template on Moodle.

4.3.2 Module / Content Design

March 2020 – July 2020

- As the Program document is taking shape, the formation of individual modules is commencing. Again, University module maker template and lesson plan templates are used as a framework to guide Industry Practitioners as they determine the content to be covered. Construction of PowerPoint files and similar delivery and interactive tools are undertaken
- The University programme Co-ordinator co-authors initial module development and lesson plans, as the Industry Practitioners engage in core Teaching & Learning classroom methodology training.
- Outcomes - Over a period of ten months, a document inclusive of Course rationale and description is drafted. Module outlines are fully determined and budgeting of resources is determined.
- The full programme is presented to the University Curriculum Board for verification. All four Industry Practitioners and two University staff are present to advance the case of program approval.
Training by using practice lessons in a virtual classroom environment is undertaken.

4.4 Delivery

Following Verification approval and feedback adjustments, the course commences.

- Prior to the commencement of each 12 week module, Industry Practitioners undertake various planning and training activities, mostly centred around lesson planning and use of delivery technology. A University staff member Education Technologist assist with one-to-one support and the Program Co-ordinator is present online in the lessons.
- Six modules are delivered. The four Industry practitioners who developed the modules and the Academic Programme Leader each deliver one module in the six module course. Another Industry Practitioner, who has delivered a module in a similar course, delivers the same module within this new course (4 + 1 + 1 = 6 modules)
- Classes are delivered in an online format and assessments and learning activities are deployed and completed.
- Software tools that are utilised include Moodle, MS Teams breakout rooms, Menti-meter, One-minute papers, YouTube videos, Moodle quiz's Padlet, Koohots, Slido and Panopto.
- Moderators facilitation is critical for synchronised online teaching with large numbers
- Access to specifically designed, Irish based, Teaching & Learning training modules for an Online learning environment, is offered to ongoing staff. See <http://REAPMidwest.ie>

4.5 Resource Requirement

Resource	Typical work requirement
Academic Co-ordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formation: 1 hr/week, over 4 weeks • Programme Design: 2hrs/week, over 4 weeks • Module Design: 2hrs/week, over 4 weeks • Programme Coordination : 4 hours / week over 12 weeks x 2 semesters of Industry Practitioner delivery • Exam Board and course completion action : 2hrs/week, over 2 weeks

Industry Practitioner Lecturer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formation: 1 hr/week, over 4 weeks • Programme Design: 2hrs/week, over 4 weeks • Module Design : 2hrs/week, over 4 weeks • Training: 2hrs/week, over 4 weeks • Delivery: 4 hrs/week, over 12 weeks • Assessment grading and exit admin including Exam Board: 4hrs/week, over last 6 weeks
Educational Technologist	4hrs/week over 16 weeks in individual and small group training and interactions spent on project during different phases

5 Feedback and observations

Feedback sessions with Industry Practitioner Tutors reported the following comments -:

- ‘Very satisfying experience ’
- ‘A high degree of commitment is required. The paid time of 72 hours per Practitioner was well underdone. In reality, the delivery involved 100 hours+’
- All Practitioners are keen to continue their involvement. At this point, none of them are seeking more permanent contracts etc, with the University, preferring to stay with Industry employment.

Industry Practitioner Tutors work summary

- Scope of work - Four weeks of preparation and training, followed by 12 weeks of delivery (i.e. 16 weeks paid). This will include a weekly delivery of a class and undertaking assessment activities. Scope to include Validation process including preparation and participation in the Verification panel.
- Participation in a regular meeting / discussion with the University Programme Leader
- A paid contract of approx. 72 hours to 144 hours per semester

- A title of “Practitioner Tutor’ or Practitioner Lecturer’
- Access to the range of University services

The University based Programme Leader / Academic, may expect the following:

- Scope of Work – Beyond regular core activities, the leadership effort to initiate program development including recruiting Industry Practitioners and leading and developing the program design and writing stages. Verification process then follows.
- Participation in regular meetings / discussion with the assembled group of Practitioner Tutors / Lecturers either as a team or in one-to-one training etc
- Limited co-teaching with these staff
- A paid Program Leader contract over the course of the program including participation in Exam Board meetings

6 Key recommendations for successful industry engagement

Based on the experience from the development and delivery process, the following recommendations are made:

- Academic Coordinator to be appointed over a 12 month period – for programme development, on-going support / medium term up to 3 years. This is essential for successful integration of Industry Practitioners into teaching.
- Industry Tutor contract length: the industry practitioner tutor would need to be available for approx. 6-9 months (part-time) to span the development and delivery lifecycle and Exam Board presence.
- Industry Tutor Contract amount: It’s clear from Tutor feedback, that in the first year of module delivery, the time required to develop and deliver the module is double the 72 hours allocated on this particular Programme. Therefore it’s recommended that the hourly contract for year 1 of module/programme delivery is 144 hrs, i.e 72 hours allocated for the module development and initial training commitment, and 72 hours for in-semester delivery, assessments correction and exam boards. The contract would scale back to 72 hours for subsequent years.
- Industry tutor Training – Modules or units of training to include pre-delivery, VLE, T+L essentials (available at <http://REAPMidwest.ie>)
- Industry tutor Training - paid at a base rate when the tutor is undertaking training and upscaled when the Tutor commences delivery of the module, included in the development aspect of the contract.

- Support of Ed-Tech – included in project planning discussions with own contract to reflect this new scope of work

Next Steps in the Graduate Diploma Programme development

- The course is funded under the HSE Human Capital Pillar program and is funded for three years, being three successive one-year post-grad Diplomas
- Planning and review is underway for the new intake. Subsequent upgrades to the course are currently being undertaken by the same Industry Practitioners and the TUS Course Program Leader
- From the Bari Conference referred to at the top of the report, a detailed PowerPoint Presentation is available.
- As a final comment, it is noted that ongoing formal Teaching & Learning training is available to these Industry Practitioners and new incoming Practitioners.
See <http://REAPMidwest.ie>
This training may be a paid / not paid undertaking and is up to the discretion of the employing authority.