

**QQI**Quality and Qualifications Ireland
Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann

Independent Evaluation Report on an Application for Validation of a Programme of Education and Training

Part 1 A

Provider name	Independent College Dublin
Date of site visit	12 December 2018
Date of report	27th June 2019
Is this a re-validation report (Yes/No)	Yes

Overall recommendations

Principal programme	Title	BA (Honours) in Accounting and Finance
	Award	Bachelor of Arts (Honours)
	Credit¹	180 (ECTS)
	Recommendation <i>Satisfactory OR Satisfactory subject to proposed conditions² OR Not Satisfactory</i>	Satisfactory.

Embedded programme³	Title	Not applicable.
	Award	

¹ Specify the credit units because more than one system of units is in use. E.g. 20 (ECTS).

² Normally an application that fails to meet the criteria in any of its aspects will be considered as not satisfactory. Nevertheless, so as to ensure that the validation process will not be implemented unreasonably, if an independent evaluation finds that a programme virtually meets the validation criteria but needs some minor modifications, the independent evaluation could conclude "Satisfactory subject to recommended special conditions" where the special conditions prescribe the defects that require to be corrected.

Further, in exceptional cases the 'special conditions' may be used to identify parts of the application that are considered satisfactory on a stand-alone basis. For example, an application might propose a programme to be provided at two locations but the independent evaluation report may find the application satisfactory on condition that it be provided only at one specified location and not at the other. These conditions will not however be used to recommend that QQI can be satisfied with a programme conditional on a different QQI award (e.g. at a lower NFQ level or having a different CAS award title) being sought than the one identified in the application.

³ Copy this panel for each embedded programme.

	Exit award (Yes/No)	
	Credit	
	Recommendation <i>Satisfactory OR Satisfactory subject to proposed conditions OR Not Satisfactory</i>	

Module⁴	Title	Not applicable.
	Award	
	Credit	
	Recommendation <i>Satisfactory OR Satisfactory subject to proposed conditions OR Not Satisfactory</i>	

Evaluators		
Name	Role	Affiliation
Ms Sinead O’Sullivan	Chair	Director of Quality Assurance & Statistical Services, National College of Ireland
Dr Trish O’Brien	Recording Secretary	Consultant, O’BRIEN / Governance Design
Mr James Browne	Subject Expert – Accounting and Finance	Senior Lecturer, Dublin Business School
Ms Hilda Burton	Subject Expert – Marketing	Lecturer in the Department of Marketing and Business Computing, Institute of Technology Tallaght
Dr Michael MacDonnell	Subject Expert – Management	Lecturer in Management Information Systems and former Head of Quinn School of Business, University College Dublin
Mr James Bourke	Learner Representative - Marketing	Current learner on a similar programme in Dublin Business School
Mr Adrian Fields	Learner Representative – Accounting & Finance	Current learner on a similar programme in Dundalk Institute of Technology
Ms Ciara Foxton	Employer Representative	Head of Financial Planning & Analysis, Circle K Ireland
Mr Kevin O’Sullivan	Employer Representative	Sales Manager, Turn / Amobee

⁴ A module leading to a QQI award is a special case of an embedded programme. Discrete modules are only validated on a stand-alone basis if they are to lead to a QQI award.

Part 1 B

BA (Honours) in Accounting and Finance

Names of centres where the programmes are to be provided	Maximum number of learners (<i>per centre</i>)	Minimum number of learners
Independent College Dublin, Block B, The Steelworks, Foley Street, Dublin 1	120 FT	20 FT

Enrolment interval (<i>normally 5 years</i>)	Date of first intake	September 2019
	Date of last intake	August 2024
Maximum number of annual intakes	2	
Maximum total number of learners per intake (over all centres)	120	
Programme duration (<u>months</u> from start to completion)	36	
Target learner groups	School leavers, international learners, internal learners transferring from another degree programme, learners from other institutions applying for direct entry to stages 2 and 3.	
Approved countries for provision	Ireland	
Delivery mode: Full-time/Part-time	Full-time	
The teaching and learning modalities	A broad range of teaching and learning approaches will take place including classroom lectures; lab sessions; practical sessions; workshops; tutorials; and individual and group work.	
Brief synopsis of the programme (e.g. who it is for, what is it for, what is involved for learners, what it leads to.)	The programme provides a grounding in the main management disciplines. It aims to explore the latest developments in the field of accounting and finance and to provide learners with the complex set of skills required to embark on a career in this sector. Graduates are expected to enter gainful employment in a variety of accounting and finance focused roles, or progress to related postgraduate programmes in other institutions. The College intends applying for exemptions from selected professional body examinations, including Chartered Accountants of Ireland (CAI), the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA), and Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA).	
Summary of specifications for teaching staff	Staff are normally required to hold a qualification at a level above the programme on which they teach. However, due to the practical nature of the programme, applicants without a qualification at this level but with significant professional expertise are considered.	

Summary of specifications for the ratio of learners to teaching-staff	1:60 Lectures 1:25 Computer lab 1:60 Workshops
Overall WTE staff/learner ratio.⁵	1:48

Programmes being replaced by the BA (Honours) in Accounting and Finance

Programmes being replaced (applicable to applications for revalidation)			Arrangement for enrolled learners	Date when replaced programme is planned to cease completely
Code	Title	Last enrolment date	Indicate whether "Teach out" or "Transfer to replacement programme"	
PG19964	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Accounting and Finance	September 2018	Transfer to replacement programme.	August 2019

Embedded programme⁶

Names of centres where the programmes are to be provided	Maximum number of learners (per centre)	Minimum number of learners
Not applicable.		

Module⁷

Names of centres where the programmes are to be provided	Maximum number of learners (per centre)	Minimum number of learners
Not applicable.		

⁵ This is the total wholetime equivalent number of staff dedicated exclusively to this programme divided by the maximum number of learners that can be enrolled with that complement of staff.

⁶ This only needs to be completed where embedded programmes may be offered independently of the principal programme. Add more subsections if there are more than one embedded programmes proposed to lead to QQI awards.

⁷ This only needs to be completed where modules may be offered independently. Add more subsections if there are more than one modules proposed to lead to QQI awards.

Other noteworthy features of the application

Due to market conditions, the programme which the BA (Honours) in Accounting and Finance intends to replace, has only been offered to learners since 2017. As noted in the Independent Programme Review Report, this impacted on the data, feedback and outcomes that the College was able to draw from in providing a rationale for this revised programme. However, the College did utilise research and incorporate learner and sector views in support of its proposed programme changes. The first year of this revised programme is shared with the BA (Honours) in Marketing programme, for which revalidation is also being sought.

The Panel spent some time discussing with the College the attrition rate on the current programme. Having explored this with staff and students, it was satisfied that the College is doing all it can to increase the number of students progressing, and that the lack of progression is not a reflection on the quality of the programme. The Panel was satisfied overall that the proposed programme is capable of being a sound and effective preparation for learners to subsequently enter the labour market or progress to further studies in this, or a related, field.

A related programme, BA Honours in Business was reviewed by a separate panel after this programme but in advance of this application for revalidation. Additional recommendations that impact on this programme where modules are shared were made. In the interests of providing the best programme possible to learners, those recommendations have been implemented in this programme and are evidenced in the application for validation.

Part 1C Evaluation of the Case for an Extension of the Approved Scope of Provision (where applicable).

Comment on the case for extending the applicant's Approved Scope of Provision to enable provision of this programme.

Not applicable.

Part 2A Evaluation against the validation criteria

QQI's validation criteria and sub-criteria are copied here in grey panels.

Criterion 1

The provider is eligible to apply for validation of the programme	
a) The provider meets the prerequisites (section 44(7) of the 2012 Act) to apply for validation of the programme.	
b) The application for validation is signed by the provider's chief executive (or equivalent) who confirms that the information provided is truthful and that all the applicable criteria have been addressed.	
c) The provider has declared that their programme complies with applicable statutory, regulatory and professional body requirements. ⁸	
Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	The Panel has evaluated the programme having regard to the criterion and sub-criteria and recommends that QQI can be satisfied that the programme meets this criterion. Information regarding protection of enrolled learners has been provided.

The Panel is satisfied that Criterion 1 has been met by the provider.

Criterion 2

The programme objectives and outcomes are clear and consistent with the QQI awards sought	
a) The programme aims and objectives are expressed plainly.	
b) A QQI award is specified for those who complete the programme. (i) Where applicable, a QQI award is specified for each embedded programme.	
c) There is a satisfactory rationale for the choice of QQI award(s).	
d) The award title(s) is consistent with unit 3.1 of QQI's <i>Policy and Criteria for Making Awards</i> .	
e) The award title(s) is otherwise legitimate for example it must comply with applicable statutory, regulatory and professional body requirements.	
f) The programme title and any embedded programme titles are (i) Consistent with the title of the QQI award sought. (ii) Clear, accurate, succinct and fit for the purpose of informing prospective learners and other stakeholders.	
g) For each programme and embedded programme (i) The minimum intended programme learning outcomes and any other educational or training objectives of the programme are explicitly specified. ⁹ (ii) The minimum intended programme learning outcomes to qualify for the QQI award sought are consistent with the relevant QQI awards standards.	
h) Where applicable, the minimum intended module learning outcomes are explicitly specified for each of the programme's modules.	

⁸ This criterion is to ensure the programme can actually be provided and will not be halted on account of breach of the law. The declaration is sought to ensure this is not overlooked but QQI is not responsible for verifying this declaration of enforcing such requirements.

⁹ Other programme objectives, for example, may be to meet the educational or training requirements of a statutory, regulatory or professional body.

<p>i) Any QQI minor awards sought for those who complete the modules are specified, where applicable.</p> <p>For each minor award specified, the minimum intended module learning outcomes to qualify for the award are consistent with relevant QQI minor awards standards.¹⁰</p>	
Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	The Panel has evaluated the programme having regard to the criterion and sub-criteria and recommends that QQI can be satisfied that the programme meets this criterion.

In response to the Panel’s feedback, the College has re-written the programme outcomes as demonstrable graduate outcome statements and aligned those outcomes more effectively with the business award standard. It has conducted a comprehensive mapping exercise between its minimum intended learning outcomes at programme and module levels. The chosen title of the programme is reflected in the balance of its content and captured in its programme aims.

Criterion 3

The programme concept, implementation strategy, and its interpretation of QQI awards standards are well informed and soundly based (considering social, cultural, educational, professional and employment objectives)

- a) The development of the programme and the intended programme learning outcomes has sought out and taken into account the views of stakeholders such as learners, graduates, teachers, lecturers, education and training institutions, employers, statutory bodies, regulatory bodies, the international scientific and academic communities, professional bodies and equivalent associations, trades unions, and social and community representatives.¹¹
- b) The interpretation of awards standards has been adequately informed and researched; considering the programme aims and objectives and minimum intended programme (and, where applicable, modular) learning outcomes.
 - (i) There is a satisfactory rationale for providing the programme.
 - (ii) The proposed programme compares favourably with existing related (comparable) programmes in Ireland and beyond. Comparators should be as close as it is possible to find.
 - (iii) There is support for the introduction of the programme (such as from employers, or professional, regulatory or statutory bodies).
 - (iv) There is evidence¹² of learner demand for the programme.
 - (v) There is evidence of employment opportunities for graduates where relevant¹³.
 - (vi) The programme meets genuine education and training needs.¹⁴

¹⁰ Not all modules will warrant minor awards. Minor awards feature strongly in the QQI common awards system however further education and training awards may be made outside this system.

¹¹ Awards standards however detailed rely on various communities for their interpretation. This consultation is necessary if the programme is to enable learners to achieve the standard in its fullest sense.

¹² This might be predictive or indirect.

¹³ It is essential to involve employers in the programme development and review process when the programme is vocationally or professionally oriented.

¹⁴ There is clear evidence that the programme meets the **target learners’** education and training needs and that there is a clear demand for the programme.

<p>c) There are mechanisms to keep the programme updated in consultation with internal and external stakeholders.</p> <p>d) Employers and practitioners in the cases of vocational and professional awards have been systematically involved in the programme design where the programme is vocationally or professionally oriented.</p> <p>e) The programme satisfies any validation-related criteria attaching to the applicable awards standards and QQI awards specifications.</p>	
Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	The Panel has evaluated the programme having regard to the criterion and sub-criteria and recommends that QQI can be satisfied that the programme meets this criterion.

As discussed in the Independent Programme Review Report, the College conducted research with stakeholders on the appropriateness of its amended programme to meeting its stated aims and objectives. It also drew upon evidence from national research on skills gaps and labour market projections when devising its programme. As the gaining of exemptions from professional body examinations is a core objective, the programme team spent significant time researching the requirements of professional bodies and benchmarking its programme against those requirements.

The Panel was provided with an overview of comparable programmes. In devising the programme, the team identified appropriate graduate attributes attached to similar programmes and adopted these. Overall, the Panel is satisfied that the proposed programme can provide its graduates with the knowledge, skills and competence required to follow careers within the sector, or to pursue further study.

Criterion 4

The programme's access, transfer and progression arrangements are satisfactory

- The information about the programme as well as its procedures for access, transfer and progression are consistent with the procedures described in QQI's policy and criteria for access, transfer and progression in relation to learners for providers of further and higher education and training. Each of its programme-specific criteria is individually and explicitly satisfied¹⁵.
- Programme information for learners is provided in plain language. This details what the programme expects of learners and what learners can expect of the programme and that there are procedures to ensure its availability in a range of accessible formats.
- If the programme leads to a higher education and training award and its duration is designed for native English speakers, then the level of proficiency in English language must be greater or equal to B2+ in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR¹⁶) in order to enable learners to reach the required standard for the QQI award.

¹⁵ Each of the detailed criteria set out in the Policy and criteria for access, transfer and progression in relation to learners for providers of further and higher education and training must be addressed in the provider's evaluation report. The detailed criteria are (QQI, restated 2015) arranged under the headings

- Progression and transfer routes
- Entry arrangements
- Information provision

¹⁶ http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Framework_EN.pdf (accessed 26/09/2015)

<p>d) The programme specifies the learning (knowledge, skill and competence) that target learners are expected to have achieved before they are enrolled in the programme and any other assumptions about enrolled learners (programme participants).</p> <p>e) The programme includes suitable procedures and criteria for the recognition of prior learning for the purposes of access and, where appropriate, for advanced entry to the programme and for exemptions.</p> <p>f) The programme title (the title used to refer to the programme):-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Reflects the core <i>intended programme learning outcomes</i>, and is consistent with the standards and purposes of the QQI awards to which it leads, the award title(s) and their class(es). (ii) Is learner focused and meaningful to the learners; (iii) Has long-lasting significance. <p>g) The programme title is otherwise legitimate; for example, it must comply with applicable statutory, regulatory and professional body requirements.</p>	
Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	The Panel has evaluated the programme having regard to the criterion and sub-criteria and recommends that QQI can be satisfied that the programme meets this criterion.

The College works with agents in the recruitment of its international learners. The Panel was assured by the robust process for student admission that was described by staff and confirmed by the students that it met. Every applicant, in addition to meeting qualification requirements, is interviewed by the College. It was emphasised that time and attention is placed on recruiting qualified and committed students to their chosen programmes. In response to the Panel's feedback, references to IELTS and Leaving Certificate grading have been amended, and the admissions process that is in place has been described in further detail in the programme document.

Criterion 5

<p>The programme's written curriculum is well structured and fit-for-purpose</p> <p>a) The programme is suitably structured and coherently oriented towards the achievement by learners of its intended programme learning outcomes. The programme (including any stages and modules) is integrated in all its dimensions.</p> <p>b) In so far as it is feasible the programme provides choice to enrolled learners so that they may align their learning opportunities towards their individual educational and training needs.</p> <p>c) Each module and stage is suitably structured and coherently oriented towards the achievement by learners of the intended <i>programme</i> learning outcomes.</p> <p>d) The objectives and purposes of each of the programme's elements are clear to learners and to the provider's staff.</p> <p>e) The programme is structured and scheduled realistically based on sound educational and training principles¹⁷.</p> <p>f) The curriculum is comprehensively and systematically documented.</p>	
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¹⁷ This applies recursively to each and every element of the programme from enrolment through to completion.

In the case of a modular programme, the pool of modules and learning pathway constraints (such as any prerequisite and co-requisite modules) is explicit and appropriate to the intended programme learning outcomes.

<p>g) The credit allocated to the programme is consistent with the difference between the entry standard and minimum intended programme learning outcomes.</p> <p>h) The credit allocated to each module is consistent with the difference between the module entry standard and minimum intended module learning outcomes.</p> <p>i) Elements such as practice placement and work based phases are provided with the same rigour and attentiveness as other elements.</p> <p>j) The programme duration (expressed in terms of time from initial enrolment to completion) and its fulltime equivalent contact time (expressed in hours) are consistent with the difference between the minimum entry standard and award standard and with the credit allocation.¹⁸</p>	
Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	The Panel has evaluated the programme having regard to the criterion and sub-criteria and recommends that QQI can be satisfied that the programme meets this criterion.

In response to the Panel’s feedback, the College undertook a thorough review of the programme document to ensure that any inconsistencies in the format of module descriptions were addressed. As part of this process, reading lists have been updated and academic texts given primary status. Some module titles have also been amended to better describe their content and pre-requisite modules have been stated. The College has developed communication documentation on programme changes for extant learners to aid their understanding of the revalidated programme.

Criterion 6

There are sufficient qualified and capable programme staff available to implement the programme as planned

- a) The specification of the programme’s staffing requirements (staff required as part of the programme and intrinsic to it) is precise, and rigorous and consistent with the programme and its defined purpose. The specifications include professional and educational qualifications, licences-to-practise where applicable, experience and the staff/learner ratio requirements. See also criterion 12 c).
- b) The programme has an identified complement of staff¹⁹ (or potential staff) who are available, qualified and capable to provide the specified programme in the context of their existing commitments.
- c) The programme's complement of staff (or potential staff) (those who support learning including any employer-based personnel) are demonstrated to be competent to enable learners to achieve the intended programme learning outcomes and to assess learners’ achievements as required.

¹⁸ If the duration is variable, for example, when advanced entry is available, this should be explained and justified

¹⁹ Staff here means natural persons required as part of the programme and accountable (directly or indirectly) to the programme’s provider, it may for example, include contracted trainers and workplace supervisors.

<p>d) There are arrangements for the performance of the programme’s staff to be managed to ensure continuing capability to fulfil their roles and there are staff development²⁰ opportunities²¹.</p> <p>e) There are arrangements for programme staff performance to be reviewed and there are mechanisms for encouraging development and for addressing underperformance.</p> <p>f) Where the programme is to be provided by staff not already in post there are arrangements to ensure that the programme will not enrol learners unless a complement of staff meeting the specifications is in post.</p>	
Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	The Panel has evaluated the programme having regard to the criterion and sub-criteria and recommends that QQI can be satisfied that the programme meets this criterion.

The maximum teaching hours allocated to an individual staff member is between 17.5 and 20. The College confirmed that suitably experienced mentors will be assigned for student projects at the end of Applied Project 1. A maximum of 5 students will be supervised by any one lecturer. Induction and Continuous Professional Development opportunities will be available to the staff supporting the BA (Honours) in Accounting & Finance. CPD is not compulsory, but staff members are compensated for their attendance, which was reported to the Panel as resulting in good attendance rates to date.

The Panel noted the evident enthusiasm of the staff cohort met as part of the revalidation process. The programme team was also very open to discussing potential programme improvements with the Panel.

In response to Panel feedback, the College has clarified the minimum qualifications and experience, or equivalence, that it currently accepts as part of its recruitment process.

Criterion 7

There are sufficient physical resources to implement the programme as planned

- a) The specification of the programme’s physical resource requirements (physical resources required as part of the programme and intrinsic to it) is precise, and rigorous and consistent with the programme, its defined purpose and its resource/learner-ratio requirements. See also criterion 12 d).
- b) The programme has an identified complement of supported physical resources (or potential supported physical resources) that are available in the context of existing commitments on these e.g. availability of:

²⁰ Development here is for the purpose of ensuring staff remain up-to-date on the discipline itself, on teaching methods or on other relevant skills or knowledge, to the extent that this is necessary to ensure an adequate standard of teaching.

²¹ Professional or vocational education and training requires that teaching staff’s professional/vocation knowledge is up to date. Being qualified in a discipline does not necessarily mean that a person is currently competent in that discipline. Therefore, performance management and development of professional and vocational staff needs to focus on professional/vocational competence as well as pedagogical competence. Professional development may include placement in industry, for example. In regulated professions it would be expected that there are a suitable number of registered practitioners involved.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) suitable premises and accommodation for the learning and human needs (comfort, safety, health, wellbeing) of learners (this applies to all of the programme’s learning environments including the workplace learning environment) (ii) suitable information technology and resources (including educational technology and any virtual learning environments provided) (iii) printed and electronic material (including software) for teaching, learning and assessment (iv) suitable specialist equipment (e.g. kitchen, laboratory, workshop, studio) – if applicable (v) technical support (vi) administrative support (vii) company placements/internships – if applicable <ul style="list-style-type: none"> c) If versions of the programme are provided in parallel at more than one location each independently meets the location-sensitive validation criteria for each location (for example staffing, resources and the learning environment). d) There is a five-year plan for the programme. It should address <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Planned intake (first five years) and (ii) The total costs and income over the five years based on the planned intake. e) The programme includes controls to ensure entitlement to use the property (including intellectual property, premises, materials and equipment) required. 	
Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	The Panel has evaluated the programme having regard to the criterion and sub-criteria and recommends that QQI can be satisfied that the programme meets this criterion.

The College has developed 25 rooms with capacities from 15 to 70. It is keeping accommodation under review and stated that it will adapt its space further if required. The College includes a lab and does not require students to have a laptop; however, in speaking with students, it appears that most students do have personal computing equipment. The College informed the Panel that it had commissioned a review of its library facilities and received recommendations that its appointed librarian is seeking to implement. The College provided evidence of its advancement of the recommendations arising from this review and timelines for the implementation of additional improvements.

Criterion 8

The learning environment is consistent with the needs of the programme’s learners

- a) The programme’s physical, social, cultural and intellectual environment (recognising that the environment may, for example, be partly virtual or involve the workplace) including resources and support systems are consistent with the intended programme learning outcomes.
- b) Learners can interact with, and are supported by, others in the programme’s learning environments including peer learners, teachers, and where applicable supervisors, practitioners and mentors.

c) The programme includes arrangements to ensure that the parts of the programme that occur in the workplace are subject to the same rigours as any other part of the programme while having regard to the different nature of the workplace.	
Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	The Panel has evaluated the programme having regard to the criterion and sub-criteria and recommends that QQI can be satisfied that the programme meets this criterion.

The Panel was assured by both staff and students that a learning environment has been created that is supportive of learner cohorts and individual learners. Students met confirmed that there were ample opportunities to engage with staff when needed and numerous invitations from across the teaching and support staff to highlight any personal or professional issues arising.

Counselling for students is outsourced by the College. Accommodations such as scribes and separate rooms have been provided for learners with teaching and learning difficulties. The Student Handbook sets out clearly how learners can present with issues arising. The College's administration offices have also implemented an open-door policy for students.

In terms of access to the library, the building is closed on Saturdays but is open coming up to examinations. IT support is outsourced, and a specialist IT resource is on-site 3 days a week. Any issues arising with the student lab is covered by this arrangement.

Criterion 9

There are sound teaching and learning strategies	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The teaching strategies support achievement of the intended programme/module learning outcomes. b) The programme provides authentic learning opportunities to enable learners to achieve the intended programme learning outcomes. c) The programme enables enrolled learners to attain (if reasonably diligent) the minimum intended programme learning outcomes reliably and efficiently (in terms of overall learner effort and a reasonably balanced workload). d) Learning is monitored/supervised. e) Individualised guidance, support²² and timely formative feedback is regularly provided to enrolled learners as they progress within the programme. 	
Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	The Panel has evaluated the programme having regard to the criterion and sub-criteria and recommends that QQI can be satisfied that the programme meets this criterion.

The College believes that the transition to a 5 credit semesterised model will provide opportunities to closely monitor student progress. Each module in the programme will be delivered in a 2.5 hours

²² Support and feedback concerns anything material to learning in the context of the programme. For the avoidance of doubt it includes among other things any course-related language, literacy and numeracy support.

block, per week, over the duration of the module (12 weeks). The programme team indicated that this format was partially influenced by learner preferences. The programme team was clear that each 2.5-hour session would be made up of a variety of delivery methods. The College’s extensive use of Moodle also supports learner’s engagement with modules outside of this delivery block. In response to Panel feedback, some additional supports for students in numerative subjects have been provided.

Peer learning was described as playing an important part in the delivery of the programme. It features in, for example, student critiqued presentations and what was termed as ‘deep learning’ at the end of a session. In the latter example, students are presented with a problem and must collectively discuss it and justify their positions through dialogue. The programme does not include a workplace component. However, the College will continue to engage guest speakers from industry and to provide practical research project opportunities.

Criterion 10

There are sound assessment strategies	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) All assessment is undertaken consistently with <i>Assessment Guidelines, Conventions and Protocols for Programmes Leading to QQI Awards</i>²³ b) The programme’s assessment procedures interface effectively with the provider’s QQI approved quality assurance procedures. c) The programme includes specific procedures that are fair and consistent for the assessment of enrolled learners to ensure the minimum intended programme/module learning outcomes are acquired by all who successfully complete the programme.²⁴ d) The programme includes formative assessment to support learning. e) There is a satisfactory written programme assessment strategy for the programme as a whole and there are satisfactory module assessment strategies for any of its constituent modules.²⁵ f) Sample assessment instruments, tasks, marking schemes and related evidence have been provided for each award-stage assessment and indicate that the assessment is likely to be valid and reliable. g) There are sound procedures for the moderation of summative assessment results. h) The provider only puts forward an enrolled learner for certification for a particular award for which a programme has been validated if they have been specifically assessed against the standard for that award.²⁶ 	
Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	The Panel has evaluated the programme having regard to the criterion and sub-criteria and recommends that QQI can be satisfied that the programme meets this criterion.

²³ See the section on transitional arrangements.

²⁴ This assumes the minimum intended programme/module learning outcomes are consistent with the applicable awards standards.

²⁵ The programme assessment strategy is addressed in the Assessment Guidelines, Conventions and Protocols for Programmes Leading to QQI Awards. See the section on transitional arrangements.

²⁶ If the award is a QQI CAS compound award it is not necessarily sufficient that the learner has achieved all the components specified in the certification requirements unless at least one of those components is a capstone component (i.e. designed to test the compound learning outcomes).

The College has included an indicative schedule of assessment at module level that is linked to an assessment schedule and has regard to the requirements of professional bodies. It has also confirmed, in the programme document and in its Quality Assurance Manual, that pass-by-compensation is not possible on the programme's capstone modules.

The programme team described how it tries to utilise real world examples, via the use of case studies and through other means, to ensure that assessment is as authentic as possible. The College provided the Panel with an overview of how it deals with academic misconduct through software, promoting an understanding of ethical principles, and devising assessments that are difficult to plagiarise. An Academic Misconduct Panel convenes in cases of alleged plagiarism or cheating, and the penalties at its disposal are documented.

Criterion 11

Learners enrolled on the programme are well informed, guided and cared for

- a) There are arrangements to ensure that each enrolled learner is fully informed in a timely manner about the programme including the schedule of activities and assessments.
- b) Information is provided about learner supports that are available to learners enrolled on the programme.
- c) Specific information is provided to learners enrolled on the programme about any programme-specific appeals and complaints procedures.
- d) If the programme is modular, it includes arrangements for the provision of effective guidance services for learners on the selection of appropriate learning pathways.
- e) The programme takes into account and accommodates to the differences between enrolled learners, for example, in terms of their prior learning, maturity, and capabilities.
- f) There are arrangements to ensure that learners enrolled on the programme are supervised and individualised support and due care is targeted at those who need it.
- g) The programme provides supports for enrolled learners who have special education and training needs.
- h) The programme makes reasonable accommodations for learners with disabilities²⁷.
- i) If the programme aims to enrol international students it complies with the *Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes to International Students*²⁸ and there are appropriate in-service supports in areas such as English language, learning skills, information technology skills and such like, to address the particular needs of international learners and enable such learners to successfully participate in the programme.
- j) The programme's learners will be well cared for and safe while participating in the programme, (e.g. while at the provider's premises or those of any collaborators involved in provision, the programme's locations of provision including any workplace locations or practice-placement locations).

²⁷ For more information on making reasonable accommodations see www.AHEAD.ie and QQI's Policies, Actions and Procedures for Access, Transfer and Progression for Learners (QQI, restated 2015).

²⁸ See Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes to International Students (QQI, 2015)

Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	The Panel has evaluated the programme having regard to the criterion and sub-criteria and recommends that QQI can be satisfied that the programme meets this criterion.

The Panel is satisfied that information of the nature identified above is readily available to learners in a variety of different formats. The College currently enrolls full-time students only on its academic programmes and has no immediate plans to seek to attract part-time students. There is a high proportion of international learners amongst its full-time cohort and the College has put supports in place for their practical and pastoral care. The Student Experience Office has been put in place to provide a range of student supports from operations to careers.

In addition to formal processes for learners presenting with and requesting supports, staff and students spoke of the proactive approach taken by all staff in encouraging students to share any issues arising and to seek supports. The Panel is satisfied that the College takes its responsibilities for the students in its care very seriously.

Criterion 12

The programme is well managed

- a) The programme includes intrinsic governance, quality assurance, learner assessment, and access, transfer and progression procedures that functionally interface with the provider's general or institutional procedures.
- b) The programme interfaces effectively with the provider's QQI approved quality assurance procedures. Any proposed incremental changes to the provider's QA procedures required by the programme or programme-specific QA procedures have been developed having regard to QQI's statutory QA guidelines. If the QA procedures allow the provider to approve the centres within the provider that may provide the programme, the procedures and criteria for this should be fit-for-purpose of identifying which centres are suited to provide the programme and which are not.
- c) There are explicit and suitable programme-specific criteria for selecting persons who meet the programme's staffing requirements and can be added to the programme's complement of staff.
- d) There are explicit and suitable programme-specific criteria for selecting physical resources that meet the programmes physical resource requirements, and can be added to the programme's complement of supported physical resources.
- e) Quality assurance²⁹ is intrinsic to the programme's maintenance arrangements and addresses all aspects highlighted by the validation criteria.
- f) The programme-specific quality assurance arrangements are consistent with QQI's statutory QA guidelines and use continually monitored completion rates and other sources of information that may provide insight into the quality and standards achieved.
- g) The programme operation and management arrangements are coherently documented and suitable.
- h) There are sound procedures for interface with QQI certification.

²⁹ See also [QQI's Policy on Monitoring \(QQI, 2014\)](#)

Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	The Panel has evaluated the programme having regard to the criterion and sub-criteria and recommends that QQI can be satisfied that the programme meets this criterion.

The programme is subject to the College's QA policies and procedures and academic governance arrangements. The College is increasingly formalising its quality assurance procedures in the context of growth. As noted previously (Criterion 6) it has been proposed that all acceptable criteria for the recruitment of staff to the programme is captured in the College's associated procedures.

The College uses a bespoke student management system to support its processing of student data and its transfer of data to QQI for certification purposes. It is confident that this system will enable it to provide quality assured student data regardless of growth in student numbers.

Part 2B Overall recommendation to QQI

BA (Honours) in Accounting and Finance

Select one	
X	Satisfactory (meaning that it recommends that QQI can be satisfied in the context of unit 2.3) of Core policies and criteria for the validation by QQI of programmes of education and training;
	Satisfactory subject to proposed special conditions (specified with timescale for compliance for each condition; these may include proposed pre-validation conditions i.e. proposed (minor) things to be done to a programme that almost fully meets the validation criteria before QQI makes a determination); ³⁰
	Not satisfactory.

Reasons³¹ for the overall recommendation

In the view of the Panel, Independent College Dublin's BA in Accounting and Finance (BAAF) has met all the criteria set out above. As a result, it is satisfied that programme revalidation can be recommended to QQI.

Summary of recommended special conditions of validation

None.

Summary of recommendations to the provider

None.

Declarations of Evaluators' Interests

No interests have been declared.

³⁰ Normally an application that fails to meet the criteria in any of its aspects will be considered as not satisfactory. Nevertheless, so as to ensure that the validation process will not be implemented unreasonably, if an independent evaluation finds that a programme virtually meets the validation criteria but needs some minor modifications, the independent evaluation could conclude "Satisfactory subject to recommended special conditions" where the special conditions prescribe the defects that require to be corrected.

³¹ Give precise reasons for the conclusions organised under each of the 12 criteria (for the programme and each embedded programme and any modules proposed to lead to QQI awards) citing supporting evidence. If any criteria or sub-criteria are not met by the application this must be stated explicitly giving precise reasons with evidence. A "Not Satisfactory" recommendation may be justified if any one of the applicable criteria or sub-criteria are not demonstrated to be satisfied.

This report has been agreed by the evaluation panel and is signed on their behalf by the chairperson.

Panel chairperson: Sinéad O'Sullivan

Date: 27/6/2019

Signed: 

Disclaimer

The Report of the External Review Panel contains no assurances, warranties or representations express or implied, regarding the aforesaid issues, or any other issues outside the Terms of Reference.

While QQI has endeavoured to ensure that the information contained in the Report is correct, complete and up-to-date, any reliance placed on such information is strictly at the reader's own risk, and in no event will QQI be liable for any loss or damage (including without limitation, indirect or consequential loss or damage) arising from, or in connection with, the use of the information contained in the Report of the External Evaluation Panel.

Part 3: Proposed Programme Schedules

Name of Provider:			Independent College Dublin					
Programme Title			Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Accounting and Finance					
Award Title			Bachelor of Arts (Honours)					
Stage Exit Award Title			N/A					
Modes of Delivery (FT/PT):			FT					
Teaching and learning modalities			FT Face to Face, Online Support					
Award Class	Award NFQ level	Award EQF Level	Stage	Stage NFQ Level	Stage EQF Level	Stage Credit (ECTS)	Date Effective	ISCED Subject code
Major	8	6	1	6	4	60	1st September 2019	0411

Module Title	Semester no. where applicable. (Semester 1 or Semester2)	Module		Credit Number	Total Learner Effort Module (hours)					Allocation of Marks (from the module assessment strategy)				
		Status	NFQ level where specified	Credit Units	Total Hours	Contact Hours	Class (or equiv.)	Directed eLearning	Hours of Independent Learning	Work-based Learning Effort	C.A. %	Supervised Project %	Proctored Practical Demonstration %	Proctored Written Exam %
				HET Credits										
Introduction to Financial Accounting	1	M	6	5	125	30	30	65		50			50	
Information Systems in Business	1	M	6	5	125	42	30	53		50			50	
Introduction to Marketing Perspectives	1	M	6	5	125	30	35	60		30	70			
Global Organisations & HRM	1	M	6	5	125	30	35	60		50			50	
Introduction to Economics	1	M	6	5	125	30	35	60		100				
Learning to Learn	1	M	6	5	125	30	35	60			60	40		
Financial Accounting	2	M	6	5	125	30	35	60		30			70	

Introduction to Statistics and Data Analytics	2	M	6	5	125	30	35	60		100			
Marketing Tools and Analysis	2	M	6	5	125	30	35	60		50			50
Organisational Behaviour	2	M	6	5	125	30	35	60		50			50
Leadership and Management	2	M	6	5	125	30	35	60		50			50
Legal Issues in Business	2	M	6	5	125	30	35	60		30			70
Special Regulations (Up to 280 characters)													

Name of Provider:			Independent College Dublin					
Programme Title			Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Accounting and Finance					
Award Title			Bachelor of Arts (Honours)					
Stage Exit Award Title			N/A					
Modes of Delivery (FT/PT):			FT					
Teaching and learning modalities			FT Face to Face, Online Support					
Award Class	Award NFQ level	Award EQF Level	Stage	Stage NFQ Level	Stage EQF Level	Stage Credit (ECTS)	Date Effective	ISCED Subject code
Major	8	6	2	7	5	60	1st September 2019	0411

Module Title	Semester no. where applicable. (Semester 1 or Semester 2)	Module		Credit Number	Total Learner Effort Module (hours)					Allocation of Marks (from the module assessment strategy)			
		Status	NFQ level where specified	Credit Units	Total Hours	Class (or equiv.) Contact Hours	Directed eLearning	Hours of Independent Learning	Work-based Learning Effort	C.A.%	Supervised Project %	Proctored Practical Demonstration %	Proctored Written Exam %
				HET Credits									
Management	1	M	7	5	125	30	35	60		40			60
Advanced Financial Accounting	1	M	7	5	125	30	35	60		30			70
Management Accounting	1	M	7	5	125	30	35	60		30			70
Corporate Finance	1	M	7	5	125	30	35	60		30			70
Income Tax	1	M	7	5	125	30	35	60		30			70
Legal Issues in Corporate Entities, Management and Regulation	1	M	7	5	125	30	35	60		30			70
Advanced Financial Accounting: Implementation Issues	2	M	7	5	125	30	35	60		30			70

Advanced Management Accounting	2	M	7	5	125	30	35	60		30			70
Financial Risk Management	2	M	7	5	125	30	35	60		30			70
Corporate Tax	2	M	7	5	125	30	35	60		30			70
Legal Issues in Corporate Financing and Associated Processes	2	M	7	5	125	30	35	60		30			70
Corporate Governance and Accountability	2	M	7	5	125	30	35	60		30			70
Special Regulations (Up to 280 characters)													

Name of Provider:			Independent College Dublin					
Programme Title			Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Accounting and Finance					
Award Title			Bachelor of Arts (Honours)					
Stage Exit Award Title			N/A					
Modes of Delivery (FT/PT):			FT					
Teaching and learning modalities			FT Face to Face, Online Support					
Award Class	Award NFQ level	Award EQF Level	Stage	Stage NFQ Level	Stage EQF Level	Stage Credit (ECTS)	Date Effective	ISCED Subject code
Major	8	6	Award	8	6	60	1st September 2019	0411

Module Title	Semester no. where applicable. (Semester 1 or	Module		Credit Number	Total Learner Effort Module (hours)					Allocation of Marks (from the module assessment strategy)					
		Status	NFQ level where specified	Credit Units	Total Hours	Class (or equiv.) Contact Hours	Directed elearning	Hours of Independent Learning	Effort	Work-based Learning	C.A.%	Supervised Project %	Proctored Practical Demonstration %	Exam %	Proctored Written
				HET Credits											
Applied Project 1*	1	M	8	5	125	30	35	60		100					
International Financial Reporting : Frameworks and Standards	1	M	8	5	125	30	35	60		30			70		
Indirect Taxes	1	M	8	5	125	30	35	60		30			70		
Audit and Assurance Frameworks	1	M	8	5	125	30	35	60		30			70		
Performance Management (Accounting)	1	M	8	5	125	30	35	60		30			70		
Strategic Financial Management	1	M	8	5	125	30	35	60		30			70		

Applied Project 2*	2	M	8	5	125	30	35	60			100		
International Financial Reporting : Advanced Standards and Consolidation	2	M	8	5	125	30	35	60		30			70
Capital Gains Tax (CGT) & Capital Acquisitions Tax (CAT)	2	M	8	5	125	30	35	60		30			70
Audit and Assurance Reporting	2	M	8	5	125	30	35	60		30			70
Advanced Performance Management (Accounting)	2	M	8	5	125	30	35	60		30			70
International Financial Management	2	M	8	5	125	30	35	60		30			70
Special Regulations: Pass by compensation cannot be applied to Applied Project 1* or Applied Project 2*													

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