

**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
Date of site visit	07 June 2019
Date of report	10 th July 2019
	26th March 2020 - Post QQI feedback
Is this a re-validation report (Yes/No)	Yes

Overall recommendations

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

Embedded programme³	Title	Certificate in Business Studies
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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.

	Award	Minor Award
	Exit award (Yes/No)	Yes
	Credit	60 ECTS
	Recommendation <i>Satisfactory OR Satisfactory subject to proposed conditions OR Not Satisfactory</i>	Satisfactory subject to proposed special conditions.

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

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.

Evaluators

Evaluators		
Name	Role	Principal occupation
Ms Sinéad O’Sullivan	Chair	Director of Quality, University of Limerick
Dr Trish O’Brien	Recording Secretary	Principal, 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
Mr Declan Doyle	Subject Expert – Management	Vice President for Development and Research, Institute of Technology, Carlow
Dr Michael MacDonnell (co-opted to panel during the internal review phased)	Subject Expert - Management Information Systems	Lecturer, School of Business, UCD
Mr Rob Farrell	Employer Representative	Digital Marketing Trainer, HubSpot
Mr Adrian Fields	Learner Representative - Accounting & Finance	Recent graduate of an Accounting and Finance programme in Dundalk Institute of Technology
Ms Barbara Mangan	Employer Representative	Associate Human Resources Director, IQVIA
Mr Lorcan Quinn	Learner Representative - Marketing	B.Sc. Marketing learner in TU Dublin, City Campus

Part 1 B

Principal Programme

Names of centres where the programmes are to be provided	Maximum number of learners (per centre)	Minimum number of learners
Independent College, Block B, The Steelworks, Foley Street, Dublin 1	280	40

Enrolment interval (normally 5 years)	Date of first intake	September 2020
	Date of last intake	February 2024
Maximum number of annual intakes	2	
Maximum total number of learners per intake (over all centres)	140	
Programme duration (months from start to completion)	36	
Target learner groups	<p>School leavers (who may apply directly). Full-time learners who may already be in employment and are seeking career progression through the attainment of a degree qualification. International applicants with minimum IELTS 6.0/CEFR B2+ level of English language competency. EU applicants with equivalent academic qualifications. Internal learners who may wish to transfer to the programme after Stage 1 of their degree studies. Learners from other institutions on similar programmes who may wish to apply for direct entry to Stages 2 and 3 of the programme.</p>	
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 business areas. It facilitates learners to examine and understand the basic business functions and how these interact in both the internal and external environment. The programme also enables learners to gain deeper understanding of the specific areas of accounting and finance, management, marketing, or IT.	
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	1:70 Lecture sessions 1:25 Computer lab sessions 1:70 Workshops	
Overall WTE staff/learner ratio.⁵	1:42 (Total lecturing staff = 20, total learners =840 based on 2 maximised intakes per year for 3 years).	

⁵This is the total wholtime 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.

Programmes being replaced by the BA (Hons) in Business Studies

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”	
PG21928	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Business Studies	February 2020	Transfer to replacement programme	February 2021

Embedded programme⁶

The Certificate in Business Studies is an exit award from the BA (Hons) in Business Studies. It is not available as a programme offered for enrolment in its own right. The following section is therefore not applicable.

Names of centres where the programmes are to be provided		Maximum number of learners (<i>per centre</i>)	Minimum number of learners
Enrolment interval (<i>normally 5 years</i>)	Date of first intake		
	Date of last intake		
Maximum number of annual intakes			
Maximum total number of learners per intake			
Programme duration (months from start to completion)			
Target learner groups			
Approved countries for provision			
Delivery mode: Full-time/Part-time			
The teaching and learning modalities			
Brief synopsis of the programme (e.g. who it is for, what is it for, what is involved for learners, what it leads to?)			
Summary of specifications for teaching staff			

⁶This 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.

Summary of specifications for the ratio of learners to teaching-staff	
Overall WTE staff/learner ratio.	

Programmes being replaced by the Certificate in Business Studies

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”	
PG21931	Certificate in Business Studies	February 2020	Transfer to replacement programme	February 2021

Other noteworthy features of the application

The programme which the BA (Honours) in Business Studies intends to replace, has been offered to learners since 2014. The first year of this revised programme is shared with the BA (Honours) in Marketing and the BA (Honours) in Accounting and Finance programmes, for which revalidation is also being sought. The College will analyse the outcomes of the review of the BA (Hons) in Business Studies in terms of their impact on those programmes. In conducting this review, the Panel was mindful of the objectives and approach included in the Terms of Reference agreed between Independent College and Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI).

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

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. ⁷	
Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	The Panel has evaluated the principal programme (and its embedded programme) having regard to the criterion and sub-criteria and recommends that QQI can be satisfied that the programme meets this criterion.

Certificate in Business Studies ⁸

The Certificate in Business Studies is an exit award offered to learners who enrolled on the BA (Honours) in Business Studies and successfully completed the first year, but who do not intend continuing with the programme. The Panel is satisfied that the provider has met Criterion 1 for the Certificate in Business Studies.

BA (Hons) in Business Studies

The Panel is satisfied that the provider has met Criterion 1 for the BA (Honours) in Business Studies.

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.	

⁷This 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.

⁸Add more subsections if there are more than one embedded programmes.

<p>(ii) Clear, accurate, succinct and fit for the purpose of informing prospective learners and other stakeholders.</p> <p>g) For each programme and embedded programme</p> <p>(i) The minimum intended programme learning outcomes and any other educational or training objectives of the programme are explicitly specified.⁹</p> <p>(ii) The minimum intended programme learning outcomes to qualify for the QQI award sought are consistent with the relevant QQI awards standards.</p> <p>h) Where applicable, the minimum intended module learning outcomes are explicitly specified for each of the programme's modules.</p> <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
Partially	The panel has evaluated the programme (and its embedded programme) having regard to the criterion and sub-criteria and recommends that QQI can be satisfied that the programme partially meets this criterion.

Certificate in Business Studies

The Panel considered that the aims, objectives and MIPLOs at Certificate in Business Studies level were appropriate to the programme and the award to which it leads. Under Criterion 5 below, the recommendations of the Panel regarding module amendments, including regarding MIMLOs, are set out.

The panel proposes as a special condition of re-validation that:

- The mapping exercise of the programme MIPLOs and MIMLOs is reviewed in the light of changes to MIMLOs arising from this review.

BA (Hons) in Business Studies

The Panel was reasonably satisfied with the overall aims and objectives of the BA (Hons) in Business Studies. However, it requested that the College document a rationale for the pathways of the programme to ensure that each is conceptually aligned with those aims and objectives (this is a proposed special condition under Criterion 3).

The Panel was not satisfied that PLO8 of the BA (Honours) in Business Studies is clear and considers that this needs to be revisited. The College explained that PLO8 is intended to reflect the outcomes associated with the Applied Project. Under Criterion 5 below, the recommendations of the Panel,

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

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.

including regarding MIMLOs, are set out. Following updates that the provider will make to the MIPLOs and MIMLOs, the Panel requested that the mapping exercise between them be updated.

The panel proposes as a special condition of re-validation that:

- MIPLO 8 is reviewed and clarified.
- The mapping exercise of the programme MIPLOs and MIMLOs is reviewed in the light of changes to both arising from this review.

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
- c) There are mechanisms to keep the programme updated in consultation with internal and external stakeholders.
- 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.
- e) The programme satisfies any validation-related criteria attaching to the applicable awards standards and QQI awards specifications.

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.

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

Certificate in Business Studies

The Certificate in Business Studies provides learners who have successfully completed the first year of the BA (Hons) in Business Studies with an exit award. The purpose of the first year of the BA (Hons) in Business Studies is to provide a sound grounding in a variety of disciplines that are relevant to the professional working in a business environment. Those remaining with the programme then begin to acquire increasingly specialised streams of knowledge, skill, and competence. The one-year embedded award benefits directly from the consultation undertaken to inform the programme as a whole, whilst retaining its identity as a broad introduction for learners who exit and learners who continue with the programme. The Panel is therefore satisfied that the concept of the Certificate in Business Studies, and its implementation, is soundly based. It also considers that the programme will benefit from the special conditions and recommendations it has made within this report.

BA (Hons) in Business Studies

The programme team explained that the original concept for the BA (Hons) in Business Studies was to give learners a business foundation to pursue a professional qualification or to enter employment. The programme had three pathways: Accounting & Finance, Management, and Marketing. The College decided to add an IT pathway as part of the programmatic review process, which focuses more on systems than programming skills. The purpose of the pathways is to provide learners with generalist and specialist knowledge that will enhance their employment opportunities and their ability to apply their learning to a variety of contexts. Graduates of the programme met by the Panel said they could see the rationale behind the programme they completed. They also identified how it led to opportunities for them to acquire accountancy and management roles.

The College conducted research with stakeholders on the appropriateness of its amended programme to meeting its stated aims and objectives, but it did report difficulties to the Panel in securing employer feedback. Equally, its response rate from requests for feedback from alumni was very low. At the same time, the programme team pointed to its own composition, which includes several individuals actively engaged in the relevant employment sectors.

The Panel noted that the design of the programme is more prescriptive than some other similar programmes that allow a 'pick and mix' approach to subject choice. The programme team explained that it considered this option but wanted to avoid too many unrelated electives that can lead to learner confusion; instead it wanted to design a programme that provides direction to learners in terms of its content and also the routes of employment to which each pathway can lead. Its consultation with learners supported that approach. The Diploma Supplement will assist graduates by detailing the pathway they followed and its component modules.

Within the existing streams the programme team wanted to increase the management orientation in the management stream and improve and update aspects of the marketing stream; such as enhancing the representation of digital marketing. The Panel observed that the programme is providing a variety of decision-making skills that graduates could deploy in a diverse range of environments. It considered that this was an important feature of the programme that could be highlighted.

The Panel identified some duplication within the programme content and issues with individual modules, which is set out under Criterion 5 below. In terms of the structure, the Panel had difficulties in understanding the concept behind the IT pathway and its modules. It noted an absence of IT expertise amongst its members and considered that the opinion of someone with subject specialism would be required to contribute to the programme review outcomes.

The Panel proposes as a special condition of re-validation that:

- A programme rationale for each pathway in the BA (Hons) in Business Studies is included in the programme document.
- Opinion is sought from a subject-specialist in IT who can comment on the appropriateness of the programme's IT pathway and act as a co-opted member of the Panel in this regard.

The Panel makes the following recommendations:

- That the College dedicates resources to deepening its relationships with graduates and employers, including as a source of guest lecturers, and essential information for future programme reviews. Specifically, in terms of employers, it is recommended that an individual be assigned the role of industry liaison.
- That the programme team considers including the acquisition by learners of a breadth of decision-making skills as one of the aims or learning outcomes of the BA (Hons) in Business Studies.

Criterion 4

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

- a) 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.

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

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> b) 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. c) 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. 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). 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. f) The programme title (the title used to refer to the programme):- <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. g) The programme title is otherwise legitimate; for example, it must comply with applicable statutory, regulatory and professional body requirements. 	
Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	The Panel has evaluated the principal programme having regard to the criterion and sub-criteria and recommends that QQI can be satisfied that the programme meets this criterion.

Certificate in Business Studies

The Certificate in Business Studies is not available to learners for direct access. As a result, this criterion is not directly relevant to the Certificate in Business Studies.

BA (Hons) in Business Studies

The Panel noted that the College's conversion rate from learner application to learner acceptance and enrolment is very high. The College explained that it works with third party agents and finds this an efficient way of recruiting learners. It focusses on maintaining high-quality agents who observe consistent entry requirements. Agents and the College also carry out vetting of learners prior to their application to the College, including questioning applicants on their motivation for pursuing the programme. The learner profile is quite mature – of the February and September 2018 student intakes, 46% and 36% respectively were aged 30 and over – and whilst largely international in profile, learners are often resident in Ireland prior to enrolment. In speaking with learners and graduates, it was clear that personal recommendations from friends who have positive experiences of the College also plays a significant part in the decision to apply.

The Panel discussed with the College the progression rate on the current BA (Hons) in Business Studies programme and particularly for a cohort in 2016 from which only a small minority (10%)

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

advanced to the second stage of the programme. The College described how it engaged with the issue and tried to determine why it had happened; it is satisfied that its entry requirements were appropriate and observed. The College has since placed increased emphasis on its admissions procedures and process and has introduced one-to-one interviews with applicants to establish their motivation. The College also confirmed that, as a result of a recommendation arising from the revalidation of another programme, it is now requesting that learners supplement their applications with a personal statement that allows them a further opportunity to articulate their motivation for wishing to enrol on the programme. Overall, the Panel was assured that the College is doing all it can to increase the number of learners progressing each year. The Student Experience Office more recently introduced by the College is a further measure for keeping connected with its learners and addressing any issues arising at the earliest opportunity and with a view to increasing retention.

Criterion 5

The programme's written curriculum is well structured and fit-for-purpose

- 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.
- 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.
- c) Each module and stage is suitably structured and coherently oriented towards the achievement by learners of the intended *programme* learning outcomes.
- d) The objectives and purposes of each of the programme's elements are clear to learners and to the provider's staff.
- e) The programme is structured and scheduled realistically based on sound educational and training principles¹⁷.
- f) The curriculum is comprehensively and systematically documented.
- g) The credit allocated to the programme is consistent with the difference between the entry standard and minimum intended programme learning outcomes.
- h) The credit allocated to each module is consistent with the difference between the module entry standard and minimum intended module learning outcomes.
- i) Elements such as practice placement and work based phases are provided with the same rigour and attentiveness as other elements.
- 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

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

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.

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

Certificate in Business Studies

The Panel reviewed each module of the Certificate in Business Studies and has made recommendations, including for special conditions. The observations it made on individual modules are detailed below:

- *Information Systems in Business* (Semester 1)
 - GDPR could feature within this module.
 - More explicit reference to Office 365 could be included earlier in the module.
- *Learning to Learn* (Semester 1)
 - Content planned for weeks 5 and 6 of this module is also covered in the second semester module Organisational Behaviour. This potential overlap should be reviewed.
 - Academic writing supports could be included in this module as an additional form of support for the College's international learners.
- *Introduction to Financial Accounting Advanced* (Semester 2)
 - The title of this module should be reconsidered.
- *Leadership and Management* (Semester 2)
 - The level of the content for Leadership and Management appears high. The programme team should consider if the second stage BA (Hons) in Business Studies module, Foundations of Management, should be moved to Stage 1 and form part of the Certificate in Business Studies.

The Panel proposes as a special condition of re-validation that:

- Data protection is explicitly included in the programme's curriculum.

The Panel recommends that:

- The observations made by the Panel on potential improvements for the Certificate in Business Studies modules are given due consideration by the programme team.
- In its review of these modules, the programme team seeks any further opportunities to slim down on the amount of content the revised programme is proposing to cover.
- Journal readings are further incorporated into module reading lists.
- The reading lists in related modules are reviewed together for opportunities to streamline and connect readings.

BA (Hons) in Business Studies

The College explained that the move to 5 credit modules for the BA (Hons) in Business Studies was learner-led and that it assists the programme team in identifying early if learners are at risk of not

continuing. Whilst accepting that the College has carefully considered this decision, the Panel cautioned that the College avoid trying to cover and assess too much material across all its modules and pathways. The Panel identified duplication between certain modules, which could help to reduce some module content.

The observations of the Panel for the BA (Hons) in Business Studies are detailed below:

Stages 1 and 2

- *Information Systems in Business* (Stage 1, Semester 1)
 - GDPR could feature within this module.
 - More explicit reference to Office 365 could be included earlier in the module.
- *Learning to Learn* (Stage 1, Semester 1)
 - Content planned for weeks 5 and 6 of this module is also covered in the second semester module Organisational Behaviour. This potential overlap should be reviewed.
 - Academic writing supports could be included in this module as an additional form of support for the College's international learners.
- *Introduction to Financial Accounting Advanced* (Stage 1, Semester 2)
 - The title of this module should be reconsidered.
- *Organisational Behaviour* (Stage 1, Semester 2)
 - Include in the reading list Huczynski, A.A, and Buchanan, D.A. 2017 *Organisational Behaviour* (9th Edition) Prentice Hall 978129092881.
- *Leadership and Management* (Stage 1, Semester 2)
 - The relationship between this module and the second semester module Foundations of Management should be reviewed. The level of the content for Leadership and Management appears high in the absence of the Foundations of Management underpinning.
- *Employability and Enterprise Skills* (Stage 2, Semester 1)
 - The relationship between this module and the Stage 1, Semester 2 module Organisational Behaviour should be reviewed for overlap in coverage of the theory of teamwork.
 - The relationship between week 10 of this module and the module learning outcomes should be considered.
 - The nature of assessment for this module should be articulated as it was for the panel (i.e., the range of ways that the presentation can be delivered).
- *Introduction to Management Accounting* (Stage 2, Semester 2)
 - The appropriateness of this module title in Stage 2 of the programme should be reconsidered.

- *Management in Practice* (Stage 2, Semester 2)
 - The first six weeks of this module should be reviewed for overlap with material already covered in other modules. The first half of this module could be used to further hone learner decision-making skills.

- *Marketing Data Analysis* (Stage 2, Semester 2)
 - This module provides a further opportunity to incorporate GDPR into the curriculum.
 - Consider if 100% continuous assessment would be appropriate for this module.

- *Operations Management* (Stage 2, Semester 2)
 - The large amount of material included in this module should be reviewed and any overlaps with other modules identified (e.g., *Project Management Tools and Concepts* in Stage 3 includes material on supply chain management).

- *Databases in Organisations* (Stage 2, Semester 2)
 - The level of the learning outcomes of this module should be reviewed (i.e., use of 'describing').
 - The assessment appears to be theoretical rather than practical and yet there is reference to 6 weeks being spent in the computer lab. The assessment and the MIMLOs for this module should be reviewed to ensure alignment.

Stage 3 Core Modules

- *Foundations of Management* (Stage 3, Semester 1)
 - The appropriateness of this module title in Stage 3 of the programme should be reconsidered.
 - MIPLO 1 and 2 could be combined into a single learning outcome.

- *Organisational Change* (Stage 3, Semester 1)
 - Some of the curriculum detail in this module could be augmented.
 - Including a presentation in the assessment methods should be considered to ensure the module is not given a theoretical treatment only.

- *Project Management Tools and Concepts* (Stage 3, Semester 1)
 - Consideration could be given to how this module could present a practical opportunity to contribute to the planning for the Applied Project.
 - Review the language of this module's learning outcomes to see if there is an opportunity for learners to 'create' and be assessed as having done so.

- *Strategic Management in Practice* (Stage 3, Semester 2)
 - Review the level of the MIMLOs for this module.
 - Consider whether an examination is required for this module.
 - Include in the reading list, Johnson, G., et al. 2017 *Exploring Corporate Strategy* (11th Edition) Pearson 9781292145136.

- *Entrepreneurial Development (Stage 3, Semester 2)*
 - The programme team could consider opportunities to link the assessment for this module with the Enterprise Ireland student competition.
 - The investor perspective could be featured in this module.
- *Leadership Ethics and Corporate Social Governance (Stage 3, Semester 2)*
 - Review this module for errors in the text of the learning outcomes and curriculum.

Stage 3 Accounting and Finance Pathway

- *Strategic Financial Management*
 - Review the amount of strategy content in the module in the first 5 weeks and address the overlap in content with other modules (see cross-module streamlining heading below).
- *Performance Management*
 - Consider including at the end of the module title (Accounting) to ensure it is not confused by learners as being a HR module.
- *International Financial Reporting: Advanced Standards and Consolidation*
 - The content of this module is not appropriate for a BA (Hons) in Business Studies learner and will need to be replaced with an alternative that builds on the foundation received in Stage 1 of the programme. The MIMLOs of the replacement module will need to be mapped to the MIPLOs.
- *Capital Gains Tax (CGT) & Capital Acquisitions Tax (CAT)*
 - The types of taxes that learners are being asked to study are too niche for the learner cohort. Income tax or corporate tax would be more fitting and relevant. The MIMLOs of the revised module will need to be mapped to the MIPLOs.

Stage 3 Marketing Pathway

- *Marketing Contexts, NFP, Entertainment and Sport*
 - In the interests of future-proofing this module, the title could be shortened to 'Marketing Contexts' and reference to sectors could equally be removed from the learning outcomes.
 - The assessment methods could be made more indicative.
- *Services Marketing*
 - Include reference to SAAS (Software as a Service) in the curriculum.
- *Marketing Channel Management – Etail, Retail*
 - The breadth of content in this module could be reviewed and slimmed down.
- *Implementation of Digital Strategies*
 - The breadth of content in this module could be reviewed and slimmed down.

- The learning outcomes could include further reference to digital strategies.
- Weeks 1, 2 and 6 could be condensed to create more space to address digital strategies.
- The use of 'identify' in the MIMLOs could be reconsidered.

Stage 3 Management Pathway

- *Strategic HRM*
 - The use of 'describe' in the MIMLOs could be reconsidered.
- *Business Finance*
 - The content of this module is not appropriate for a BA (Hons) in Business Studies learner and will need to be replaced with an alternative that builds on the foundation received in earlier in the programme. The MIMLOs of the replacement module will need to be mapped to the MIPLOs.

Stage 3 IT Pathway

- *Contemporary Issues in Information Technology*
 - Privacy, cyberpsychology, data protection and GDPR could be referenced in the curriculum.
- *Strategic Management of Information Systems*
 - Clarify in the description of this module's assessment if it is theoretical or lab based.
- *Information Protection and Information Systems Security*
 - The appropriateness of MIMLOs 1 and 2 to Level 8 should be considered.

Cross-module streamlining

- As noted above, the amount of strategy content in *Strategic Financial Management* should be reviewed. In doing so, the overlap in content with the *Management* module, the *Corporate Finance* module, and the *Strategic Management* module should be addressed.
- There is also an opportunity to better coordinate and streamline the content across management modules to reduce duplication. For example, in *Foundations of Strategic Management*, *Strategic Management in Practice*, *Strategic Financial Management*, *Marketing Tools & Analysis* and *Implementation of Digital Strategies* there is considerable overlap of Porter's work. Consolidating this material into the mandatory modules will provide scope to focus on more niche and discipline-specific topics in the electives.

The Panel proposes as a special condition of re-validation that:

- Data protection is explicitly included in the programme's curriculum.

- The *International Financial Reporting: Advanced Standards and Consolidation* module (Accounting and Finance pathway, stage 3) is replaced by a more suitable module for BA (Hons) in Business Studies learners that builds on the foundation received earlier in the programme. The MIMLOs of the replacement module will need to be mapped to the MIPLOs.
- The content of the *Capital Gains Tax (CGT) & Capital Acquisitions Tax (CAT)* module is significantly revised and made suitable for BA (Hons) in Business Studies learners, who will have limited foundation in the subject-matter.
- The amount of strategy content in the first 5 weeks of the *Strategic Financial Management* module is reviewed and the overlap in content with other modules addressed, including the *Management* module, the *Corporate Finance* module, and the *Strategic Management* module.
- The *Business Finance* module is taken out of the Management Pathway and replaced with a more suitable module for BA (Hons) in Business Studies learners that builds on the foundation received earlier in the programme.
- The content across management modules is coordinated and streamlined to reduce duplication, notably regarding reference to Porter.
- Where reference has been made in the Panel's comments on improvements required to MIMLOs, that these are addressed.

The Panel makes the following recommendations:

- The observations made by the Panel on other potential improvements for the BA (Hons) in Business Studies are given consideration by the programme team.
- In its review of these modules, the programme team seeks any further opportunities to slim down on the amount of content the revised programme is proposing to cover.
- Journal readings are further incorporated into module reading lists.
- The reading lists in related modules are reviewed together for opportunities to streamline and connect readings.

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).

<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <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 (and its embedded programme) having regard to the criterion and sub-criteria and recommends that QQI can be satisfied that the programme meets this criterion.

Certificate in Business Studies

The College's plans for expansion of its BA (Hons) in Business Studies will have a direct impact on the Certificate in Business Studies. As a result, the Panel is recommending the same special condition for its revalidation as specified and elaborated below under the BA (Hons) in Business Studies below.

The Panel proposes as a special condition of re-validation that:

- o The College documents its assurances that it will review and confirm the adequacy of its staff resources if it is to escalate its learner recruitment numbers to the maximum numbers outlined in its plans.

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.

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/vocational 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.

BA (Hons) in Business Studies

The College generally requires that staff members have a qualification above the level of the programme on which they are teaching. It is clear, however, that the College also places significant importance on industry experience. The Head of School is the only full-time, permanent, whole-time academic staff member who will be engaged in the delivery of the BABS programme; the remainder of staff are contract based, but many have been with the College since, or soon after, its establishment. The College considers that there are benefits for lecturers and for the College in contract arrangements which provide flexibility, and which essentially lead to the pooling of experience and continuous professional development benefits. While the whole-time equivalent staff to learner ratio is adversely impacted by the composition of staff, the Panel is satisfied that the staff to learner ratio is currently appropriate; this view is also informed by the bank of appropriate part-time lecturers that the College has developed and can access. The College also stated to the Panel its intention to increase the full-time salaried teaching staff of the College.

The College outlined that all staff receive comprehensive induction on appointment and that updates are provided through re-introduction where procedures or systems have changed. CPD supports are provided to staff including on learning outcomes and the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). The College is also open to requests from staff for CPD. Attendance at CPD is paid at a reduced CPD rate and attracts high levels of attendance.

The Panel considered that the programme team was very open to discussing potential programme improvements with the Panel.

The Panel proposes as a special condition of re-validation that:

- o The College documents its assurances that it will review and confirm the adequacy of its staff resources if it is to escalate its learner recruitment numbers to the maximum numbers outlined in its plans.

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:
 - (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

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (v) technical support (vi) administrative support (vii) company placements/internships – if applicable <p>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).</p> <p>d) There is a five-year plan for the programme. It should address</p> <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. <p>e) The programme includes controls to ensure entitlement to use the property (including intellectual property, premises, materials and equipment) required.</p>	
Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Partially	The panel has evaluated the programme (and its embedded programme) having regard to the criterion and sub-criteria and recommends that QQI can be satisfied that the programme partially meets this criterion.

Certificate in Business Studies

All special conditions and other recommendations made directly below for the BA (Hons) in Business Studies, apply equally to the Certificate in Business Studies.

BA (Hons) in Business Studies

As it is currently constituted, the BA (Honours) in Business Studies has variable levels of success in retaining its learners from one stage to the next. This is discussed further under Criterion 4. These figures are also relevant in determining the adequacy of physical resources. Based on the most recent progression information available (February 2018), of 116 learners enrolled, 59% progressed to the second stage of the programme from an eligible cohort of 86%. These reduced levels of advancement have resulted in the current resources of the College being adequate to learner needs - a consideration of capacity is included as part of the approach to this Programme Review in its agreed terms of reference.

The Panel noted, however, that in its submission for revalidation, the College has identified a maximum intake to its BA (Hons) in Business Studies of 280, drawn from two recruitment periods in a year. Each maximum grouping of 140 learners would be taught separately. The Panel confirmed with the College that its largest room currently facilitates 70 learners and its computer laboratory has 25 stations. The revalidation documentation provided by the College doesn't refer to devising a plan for increasing capacity to meet its target enrolment intake. In discussion, the College explained that it has twice-yearly planning meetings to review and address current and anticipated resource requirements; an outcome of this is the College's plans to invest in a second computer laboratory. It also confirmed that if it were to succeed in recruiting its target learners the College would increase its classroom and laboratory capacity accordingly; including by combining rooms.

During its visit, the Panel reviewed the College's library. The Panel was aware that a commissioned

review of the College's library facilities has been undertaken. Its newly appointed librarian is currently implementing the recommendations arising from that review and will, with the support of the College, address all of these by the end of the year. The Panel was also informed that the College librarian is providing induction for learners on the library and on referencing conventions, and one-to-one consultation sessions with staff and learners to guide them towards appropriate resources to support their studies and research.

The College provides study space outside of the library by making room booking schedules available to learners so that they can identify available rooms. The library also extends its opening hours in advance of assessments. To date, the College reports that there have been no overall capacity issues with the library; which was largely supported by the learners met by the Panel. It also committed to increasing the library if needed.

In terms of the BA (Hons) in Business Studies programme specifically – with equal application to the Certificate in Business Studies – it was noted by the Panel that some core texts proposed for the revised programme were not yet available via the library catalogue. The programme team said that some of the texts had not yet been published, which accounts for some omissions.

The Panel proposes as a special condition of re-validation that:

- o The College documents its assurances that it will only escalate its learner recruitment numbers in parallel with a plan for expansion of its physical resources.
- o A lend copy and a referral copy of all core texts listed in the programme is made available in the College's library prior to the launch of the revised programme.

The Panel makes the following recommendations:

- o The College should continue to build on the improvements made to its library services and place emphasis on addressing the remaining recommendations arising from its commissioned review by the end of this year.

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 (and its embedded programme) having regard to the criterion and sub-criteria and recommends that QQI can be satisfied that the programme meets this criterion.

Certificate in Business Studies

As for the BA (Hons) in Business Studies. No special conditions or other recommendations are made.

BA (Hons) in Business Studies

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

Counselling for learners 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 learners.

Criterion 9

There are sound teaching and learning strategies	
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, support ²² and timely formative feedback is regularly provided to enrolled learners as they progress within the programme.	
Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Partially	The panel has evaluated the programme (and its embedded programme) having regard to the criterion and sub-criteria and recommends that QQI can be satisfied that the programme partially meets this criterion.

Certificate in Business Studies

Overall the Panel was satisfied that the teaching, learning and assessment strategy for the Certificate in Business Studies is reasonably well articulated. It has some concerns regarding the further integration with assessment at module level, however, which are detailed under Criterion 10. It is also conscious that an increase in learner intake will impact on the Certificate in Business Studies. It therefore makes the following recommendation which is elaborated upon below:

The Panel makes the following recommendations:

- o That the programme team considers how its teaching, learning and assessment strategy could be effectively scaled up in the event of an escalation of learner numbers.

BA (Hons) in Business Studies

The College believes that the transition to a 5 credit semesterised model will provide opportunities to closely monitor learner progress. Each module in the programme will be delivered in a 2.5 hours block, per week, over the duration of the module (12 weeks). The programme team indicated that this format was partially influenced by learner preferences and that a variety of delivery methods would be utilised. The College is making increased use of Moodle as a support for learner engagement with modules outside of class delivery. It is correspondingly providing further training for lecturers to utilise the full range of resources that Moodle incorporates. The programme does not include a workplace component; however, the College engages guest speakers from industry

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.

and reinforces practical research opportunities through the Applied Project.

The Panel spent some time discussing the IT pathway with the programme team. It considered that the approach to delivering on the associated module outcomes was quite theoretical where the Panel expected more hands-on delivery and assessment strategies. A related special condition of validation regarding further opinion to be sought on the IT pathway is referenced in Criterion 3.

The Panel proposes as a special condition of re-validation that:

- The programme team reviews the alignment of its teaching and learning strategy with its assessment strategy for the BA (Hons) in Business Studies.

The Panel makes the following recommendations:

- That the programme team considers how its teaching, learning and assessment strategy could be effectively scaled up in the event of an escalation of learner numbers.

Criterion 10

<p>There are sound assessment strategies</p> <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

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).

Partially	The panel has evaluated the programme (and its embedded programme) having regard to the criterion and sub-criteria and recommends that QQI can be satisfied that the programme partially meets this criterion.
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Certificate in Business Studies

The Panel considered that module assessment in the Certificate in Business Studies programme is not fully aligned with the programme's teaching, learning and assessment strategy. It was of the view that in its efforts to minimise academic misconduct, the College has unnecessarily restricted itself in the assessment methods it has chosen. It identified the same issues for the BA (Hons) in Business Studies; these are elaborated in more detail below. The special condition recommended below, therefore applies equally to the Certificate in Business Studies.

BA (Hons) in Business Studies

The programme team described how it endeavours to utilise real world examples, via the use of case studies and through other means, to ensure that assessment is as authentic as possible. It also 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.

The Panel considered that module assessment in the BA (Hons) in Business Studies is not fully aligned with the programme teaching, learning and assessment strategy. It was of the view that in its efforts to minimise academic misconduct, the College has unnecessarily restricted itself in the assessment methods it has chosen for a range of modules. For instance, almost every module has some form of written assessment requirement. At the same time, there are gaps in explanation of how it is intended the assessment methods would be implemented by module leaders. In addition, the Panel encouraged opportunities for further cross-module assessment to underline the connections between module subjects, and as a measure towards avoiding over-assessment.

The programme team expanded on its planned module assessments and raised the concern of becoming too restricted in the approach to assessment at a module level if too much prescription is included in the programme document. The Panel explained its view that the assessment descriptions could be richer and more informative and innovative, without being rigid. It also suggested that there is a benefit for part-time lecturers to be able to understand from the programme document how the assessment of the module should be approached and how it fits with the rest of the programme. In this sense, module descriptors need to be living documents that provide useful information to the learner and lecturer.

In reviewing the assessment schedule for the programme, the Panel noted that little assessment beyond formative non-credit bearing assessment (largely MCQs) is taking place in the first six weeks of each semester. It suggested that there may be opportunities to assess at an earlier stage to avoid a concentration of assessment in the latter part of the semester.

The Panel proposes as a special condition of re-validation that:

- The programme team reviews its module assessment methods and better aligns them with the objectives of its programme teaching, learning and assessment strategy and, by extension, its objectives and intended outcomes for the programme itself.

The Panel recommends that:

- In reviewing its assessment methods, the programme team explores opportunities for cross-module assessment and is less prescriptive in its description of assessment methods.

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).

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

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)

Certificate in Business Studies

The College's plans for expansion of its BA (Hons) in Business Studies will have a direct impact on the Certificate in Business Studies. As a result, the Panel is recommending the same special condition for its revalidation as specified and elaborated below under the BA (Hons) in Business Studies below.

BA (Hons) in Business Studies

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 learners only. 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. Supports for learners requiring reasonable accommodations for assessment were also described by the College. The Student Experience Office provides a range of learner supports from operations to careers and was referenced by students as being an effective addition to student supports. All these services are communicated to learners from induction and throughout their time with the College. The role of the Senators (class representatives) is proving increasingly important in this regard and as a form of effective two-way communication between the College and its learners.

In its review of the curriculum (Criterion 5) the Panel recommended that academic writing could be usefully integrated into the Learning to Learn module as an additional form of support for learners.

In addition to formal processes for learners presenting with and requesting supports, staff and learners emphasised the proactive approach taken by all staff in encouraging learners to share any issues arising and to seek supports. The Panel is satisfied that the College takes its responsibilities for the learners in its care very seriously. It also noted that the close relationship the College has developed with its learners is contributed to it by its current scale; it considers that it's important for the College to give thought to how this can be maintained if its learner numbers grow.

The Panel proposes as a special condition of re-validation that:

- o The College documents its assurances that it will review and confirm the adequacy of its learner supports if it is to escalate its learner recruitment numbers.

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.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	
Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	The panel has evaluated the programme (and its embedded programme) having regard to the criterion and sub-criteria and recommends that QQI can be satisfied that the programme meets this criterion.

Certificate in Business Studies

As for the BA (Hons) in Business Studies.

BA (Hons) in Business Studies

The programme is overseen by the College's governance system and is subject to its QA policies and procedures. The staff profile appropriate to this programme is included in the programme document, as is the physical resources that it requires. As noted elsewhere, the Panel is not concerned about the College's current capacity to run this programme in terms of both human and physical resources, but it has recommended a special condition regarding these areas in the context of future expansion (Criterion 7).

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

²⁹ See also QQI's Policy on Monitoring (QQI, 2014)

Part 2B Overall recommendation to QQI

Certificate in Business Studies

Select one	
	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;
X	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

As documented throughout this report, under each criterion, the Panel has recommended some special conditions and made recommendations to Independent College for the improvement of the Certificate in Business Studies.

BA (Hons) in Business Studies

Select one	
	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;
X	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); ³²
	Not satisfactory.

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.

³² 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.

Reasons³³ for the overall recommendation

As documented throughout this report, under each criterion, the Panel has recommended some special conditions and made recommendations to Independent College for the improvement of the principal programme, BA (Hons in Business Studies).

Summary of recommended special conditions of validation

All recommended special conditions should be met prior to application to QQI for revalidation of the BA (Hons) in Business Studies and the embedded Certificate in Business Studies:

Certificate in Business Studies (only)

- The mapping exercise of the programme MIPLOs and MIMLOs is reviewed in the light of changes to MIMLOs arising from this review.

BA (Hons) in Business Studies (only)

- MIPLO 8 is reviewed and clarified.
- The mapping exercise of the programme MIPLOs and MIMLOs is reviewed in the light of changes to both arising from this review.
- A programme rationale for each pathway in the BA (Hons) in Business Studies is included in the programme document.
- Opinion is sought from a subject-specialist in IT who can comment on the appropriateness of the programme's IT pathway and act as a co-opted member of the Panel in this regard.
- The *International Financial Reporting: Advanced Standards and Consolidation* module is replaced by a more suitable module for BA (Hons) in Business Studies learners that builds on the foundation received earlier in the programme. The MIMLOs of the replacement module will need to be mapped to the MIPLOs.
- The content of the *Capital Gains Tax (CGT) & Capital Acquisitions Tax (CAT)* module is significantly revised and made suitable for BA (Hons) in Business Studies learners, who will have limited foundation in the subject-matter. The MIMLOs of the revised module will need to be mapped to the MIPLOs.

³³ 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.

- The amount of strategy content in the first 5 weeks of the *Strategic Financial Management* module is reviewed and the overlap in content with other modules addressed, including the *Management* module, the *Corporate Finance* module and the *Strategic Management* module.
- The *Business Finance* module is taken out of the Management Pathway and replaced with a more suitable module for BA (Hons) in Business Studies learners that builds on the foundation received earlier in the programme. The MIMLOs of the replacement module will need to be mapped to the MIPLOs.
- The content across management modules is coordinated and streamlined to reduce duplication, notably regarding reference to Porter.
- The programme team reviews the alignment of its teaching and learning strategy with its assessment strategy for the BA (Hons) in Business Studies.

BA (Hons) in Business Studies and Certificate in Business

- That the programme team reviews its module assessment methods and better aligns them with the objectives of its programme teaching, learning and assessment strategy and, by extension, its objectives and intended outcomes for the programme itself.
- Data protection is explicitly included in the programme's curriculum.
- Where reference has been made in the Panel's comments on improvements required to MIMLOs, that these are addressed.
- The College documents its assurances that it will review and confirm the adequacy of its staff resources if it is to escalate its learner recruitment numbers to the maximum numbers outlined in its plans.
- The College documents its assurances that it will only escalate its learner recruitment numbers in parallel with a plan for expansion of its physical resources.
- A lend copy and a referral copy of all core texts listed in the programme is made available in the College's library prior to the launch of the revised programme.
- The College documents its assurances that it will review and confirm the adequacy of its learner supports if it is to escalate its learner recruitment numbers to the maximum numbers outlined in its plans.

Summary of recommendations to the provider

BA (Hons) in Business Studies (only)

- That the programme team considers including the acquisition by learners of a breadth of decision-making skills as one of the aims or learning outcomes of the BA (Hons) in Business Studies.
- That the programme team reviews the alignment of its teaching and learning strategy with its assessment strategy for the BA (Hons) in Business Studies.

- o That the programme team considers how its teaching, learning and assessment strategy could be effectively scaled up in the event of an escalation of learner numbers.

BA (Hons) in Business Studies and Certificate in Business

- o That the College dedicates resources to deepening its relationships with graduates and employers, including as a source of guest lecturers, and essential information for future programme reviews. Specifically, in terms of employers, it is recommended that an individual be assigned the role of industry liaison.
- o The observations made by the Panel on potential improvements for modules are given due consideration by the programme team.
- o In its review of modules, the programme team seeks any further opportunities to slim down on the amount of content the revised programme is proposing to cover.
- o Journal readings are further incorporated into module reading lists.
- o The reading lists in related modules are reviewed together for opportunities to streamline and connect readings.
- o The College should continue to build on the improvements made to its library services and place emphasis on addressing the remaining recommendations arising from its commissioned review by the end of this year.
- o That the programme team considers how its teaching, learning and assessment strategy could be effectively scaled up in the event of an escalation of learner numbers.
- o In reviewing its assessment methods, the programme team explores opportunities for cross-module assessment and is less prescriptive in its description of assessment methods.

Declarations of Evaluators' Interests

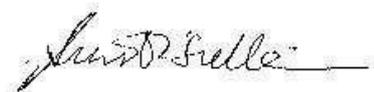
No interests have been declared.

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

Panel chairperson: Sinéad O'Sullivan

Date: 10th July 2019

Signed:



Addendum

I have read the amended submission document for the BA Hons in Business and have received feedback from the other members of the independent evaluation panel who have also received and reviewed the amended documentation.

The Panel would like to acknowledge the significant amount of work undertaken to respond to the conditions and recommendations in the panel report.

The panel notes and acknowledges the assurances provided by the President of Independent College Dublin in relation to resourcing and student support. The Panel recommends that the physical resources required to implement the IT stream of the programme are closely monitored and kept under review by senior management.

I can state that it addresses in a largely satisfactory manner, all the conditions made by the panel. Additional recommendations made by the panel have also been considered.

Prior to submission of the programmes for revalidation to QQI, the panel recommends that that the potential graduate roles indicated in particular for the IT stream are reviewed so that ICD is confident that learners can be recruited into these roles.

Panel chairperson: Sinéad O'Sullivan

Date: 24th February 2020

Signed:



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