

National College of Ireland  
**Programme Review & Revalidation**



**BA (Hons) Psychology**  
**Provider Evaluation Report**  
**June 2017**

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National College of Ireland  
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BA (Hons) Psychology  
Self-Evaluation Report  
June 2017

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# 1 Introduction and terms of reference for the review

## 1.1 Background to review

We are seeking revalidation for the BA (Hons) in Psychology, since it is approaching the end of its initially validated 5 year cycle (2012-2017). Given the success of this programme to date, there is a strong rationale for its continued provision. Our BA makes a valuable contribution to the range of offerings within NCI, and also makes a strong contribution to the options for students wishing to study psychology in Ireland, which continues to be a very popular subject choice across all third level institutions. As evidence of this popularity, undergraduate degrees in psychology attract among the highest-ranking CAO points in the country). This popularity, along with our growing reputation, has ensured that interest and demand for places on the BA (Hons) in Psychology at NCI has increased since initial validation.

In the years following validation, we have had two cohorts of graduates, many of whom have gone on to be successful in a variety of areas, gaining employment or engaging in further postgraduate study (see section 3.5 for more detail). Graduates and current students have reported positive feedback on the programme (see section 5.1 and 5.2), and external examiners have commended the learning, teaching and assessment strategies throughout (see section 3.6).

As further testament to the quality of the programme, we secured PSI accreditation in 2014 (accredited until February 2019). In order to ensure this accreditation, the college invested in the necessary resources (including staff, space and equipment), and the programme team reflected on the structure and content of the programme in terms of how it met the PSI criteria. This process of reflection has been, and continues to be, a core feature of the development of the programme which, over the years, has resulted in some minor changes to aspects of modules and their delivery. We have recruited a number of highly qualified lecturing staff since initial validation, who have extensive expertise in a variety of domains within the discipline psychology. This has resulted in a number of valuable and diverse perspectives which has in turn influenced our ongoing programme development.

The main process involved in the current programmatic review is to engage in a fundamental critical self-study of the programme and to re-appraise all aspects of the programme delivery. This self-study was designed to help improve the programme and, as such, presents an opportunity for those delivering the programme to improve its quality and delivery. The review is intended to allow the programme committee to reflect on and evaluate the effectiveness of the quality assurance mechanisms affecting the psychology programme.

## 1.2 Management of programmatic review

This process is project-managed by the Quality Assurance & Statistical Services (QASS) Office. Specifically, the project steering group consists of:

| Name                            | Role                                              |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Prof. Jimmy Hill (Chair)</b> | Vice President, Academic Affairs & Research       |
| <b>Dr Colette Darcy</b>         | Vice Dean, School of Business                     |
| <b>Dr Leo Casey</b>             | Director Learning & Teaching                      |
| <b>Ms Sinéad O'Sullivan</b>     | Director Quality Assurance & Statistical Services |

|                                      |                                                           |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Dr Rebecca Maguire</b>            | Programme Director of BA (Hons) Psychology                |
| <b>Members of psychology faculty</b> | See section 2.3 for details of staffing for the programme |

### 1.3 Terms of reference

In line with QQI policies and procedures, the programme team aimed to explore the following questions as part of the programmatic review process:

- (1) What has been learned about the programme, as an evolving process (by which learners acquire knowledge, skill and competence), from the experience of providing it for the past five years?
- (2) What can be concluded from a quantitative analysis of admission data, attrition rates by stage, completion rates and grades achieved by module, stage and overall?
- (3) What reputation do the programme and provider have with stakeholders (learners, staff, funding agencies, regulatory bodies, professional bodies, communities of practice, employers, other education and training providers) and in particular, what views do the stakeholders have about the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats concerning the programme's history and its future?
- (4) What challenges and opportunities are likely to arise in the next five years, and what modifications to the programme are required in light of these?
- (5) Whether the programme in light of its stated objectives and intended learning outcomes demonstrably addresses explicit learning needs of target learners and society?
- (6) What other modifications need to be made to the programme and its awards to improve or reorient it?
- (7) Whether the programme (modified or unmodified) meets the current QQI validation criteria (and sub-criteria) or, if not, what modifications need to be made to the programme to meet the current criteria?
- (8) Whether the provider continues to have the capacity and capability to provide the programme as planned (considering, for example, historical and projected enrolment numbers and profile and availability and adequacy of physical, financial and human resources) without risk of compromising educational standards or quality of provision in light of its other commitments (i.e. competing demands) and strategy?
- (9) What is the justification (or otherwise) for the provider continuing to offer the programme (modified or unmodified)?
- (10) What changes need to be made to related policies, criteria and procedures (including QA procedures)?

In preparing the self-study, the programme committee has consulted with current learners, graduates of the programme, and the Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI), more detail of which can be seen in section 5.

## 2 Objectives and strategy

This section provides some contextual information about NCI, the School of Business, the Psychology programme and team, as well as the Quality Assurance procedures in place.

### 2.1 Overview of National College of Ireland

National College of Ireland (NCI) is a not-for-profit registered charity, limited by guarantee and without share capital. The College is partially funded, deriving state funding (in the form of core grant) directly from the Department of Education and Skills. In the financial year to 30 June 2015, this funding amounted to €1.9 million. The College also has funding, capped at 925 students, under the Free Fees initiative which amounted to €3.7 million in the same year. The remaining income is made up of student registration fees, postgraduate and part-time fees and other income; total income for 2015/16 was €20.4m.

The College was established in 1951 and since then has made a unique and exceptional contribution to education in Ireland. From its foundation as the Catholic Workers College, NCI has transformed over successive decades, constantly re-inventing itself to reflect and respond to the changing needs of Irish society. At the heart of the institution lies an unwavering commitment to widening access to higher education.

In 2002 NCI re-located from its original site on Sandford Road, Ranelagh to its current, purpose-built facilities at the IFSC on Mayor Square. With the development of the IFSC and the Dublin docklands, the Dublin Docklands Development Authority wanted an academic institution that would develop strong links with the local community and help to address educational disadvantage.

NCI has participated in the HEA Landscape Strategy consultation process. This dialogue has been particularly useful for NCI as it provided the College with the opportunity to showcase its long-standing contribution to education, lifelong learning and community. Following these discussions, the HEA issued its report to the Minister in May 2013, where (among other things) they outlined their proposed framework for regional clusters. Although an independent provider, NCI has been placed the Dublin/Leinster Pillar II Cluster along with DCU, Maynooth University, DIT, IT Tallaght, IT Blanchardstown, Dundalk IT, Athlone IT and RCSI. Membership of this pillar has allowed NCI to engage with DCU and Maynooth University (formerly NUIM) as its provider of Protection of Enrolled Learners (PEL) arrangements for the full suite of NCI programmes.

The mission statement of NCI is *“Changing Lives through Education”*.

#### 2.1.1 Governance and Management of NCI

With an independent Chair, the Governing Body of the National College of Ireland is comprised of representatives from the national employer & trades union bodies, the Jesuit Community, representatives from wider education and business, as well as the President, staff and learner representation.

##### Current Governing Body

|                          |                                               |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| Fr Laurence Moloney, S.J | Independent Chairman, Provincial Jesuit Order |
| Ms. Aine Casey           | NCI Non-Academic staff member                 |
| Ms Frances Sheridan      | NCI Academic staff member                     |
| Mr. Brendan McGinty      | Stratify Consultants                          |
| Mr. Peter McLoone        | Former General Secretary Impact Trade Union   |
| Ms Gina Quin             | President NCI                                 |



|                        |                                             |
|------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| Dr Tony White          | Former Director CIMA,                       |
| Mr Stephen Cleary      | President NCI Student Union                 |
| Ms Brigid McManus      | Former Secretary General, Dept of Education |
| Ms Barbara Cotter      | Former Partner at A&L Goodbody              |
| Ms Patricia Gibbons    | President, SIPTU College                    |
| Mr Michael Brady       | MD, Mediolanum                              |
| Mr Liam O Donoghue     | COO, IBEC                                   |
| Fr Kevin O'Higgins, SJ | Jesuit University Support & Training        |

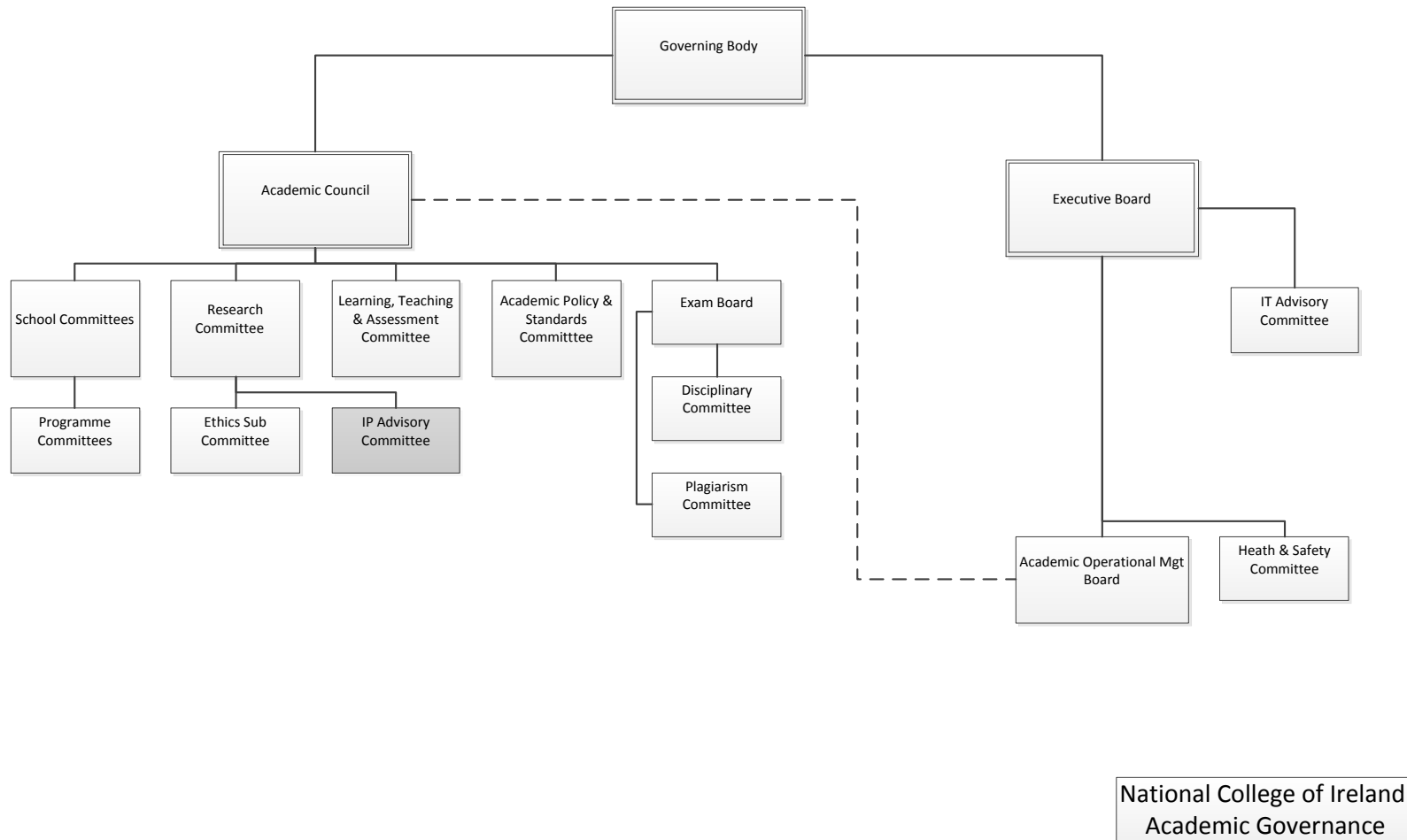
The College is managed by an Executive Team, chaired by the President. The Executive Board manages the day to day operations of the College and comprises the President, Vice President, Director of Finance, Registrar, Director of HR, and Director of Marketing,

### **2.1.2 Academic Governance**

Academic governance is provided by Academic Council and its subcommittees;

- Academic Policy & Standards Committee
- Learning Teaching & Assessment
- Research
- School and Programme Committees

The structure of these committees is outlined below.



### 2.1.3 Provision of programmes

Through its two schools, the School of Business and the School of Computing, NCI offers over 80 full-time and part-time programmes at levels 6-10 of the National Framework of Qualifications. The BA (Hons) Psychology programme is currently delivered within the School of Business in NCI. The School delivers a wide range of other programmes at undergraduate and postgraduate level, on both a full-time and a part-time basis. These include programmes in the areas of human resources, management, accounting and finance, and marketing. NCI also delivers a number of programmes in education, teaching and learning. A full list of programmes in the School of Business can be seen in section 2.3.

In terms of the provision of psychology programmes in the School, only the BA (Hons) in Psychology is being delivered at present, in part-time (4 years) and full-time (3 years) format. The BA (Hons) in Psychology is a self-funded course which does not qualify under the free-fees initiative.

However, the psychology team also plan to launch an MSc in Psychology in the coming years. Furthermore, there are collaborative arrangements in place with Maynooth University involving the co-supervision of PhD students (see also section 2.5.3).

### 2.1.4 School Management

Each of the two schools, the School of Business and School of Computing are managed by a Dean and Vice Decanal Structure. The School of Business has two Vice Deans, one with responsibility for Postgraduate Studies and Research and the other with responsibility for Undergraduate Studies. The Dean has responsibility for effective day to day management of the School and implementing the quality assurance processes of NCI within the School. The Vice Dean has responsibility for the management of all full-time and part-time postgraduate programmes and supporting the implementation of the College Research Strategy within the School.

### 2.1.5 Learning, Teaching & Assessment Strategy

NCI's Learning and Teaching Strategy is encapsulated in its mission, vision and values and at its core is the creation and delivery of an educational experience that is innovative, responsive and enterprise focused. A copy of this strategy is included in the appendix.

The Learning and Teaching strategy is therefore characterised by four key themes:

- Focus on the Learner
- Excellence in Teaching
- Quality Assessments
- Professional Development for Teaching and Learning

With respect to **focusing on the learner**, students are placed at the centre in every aspect of teaching within NCI. This involves respecting cultural diversity and the age of learner, fostering skills for the 21<sup>st</sup> century and managing students through the myriad challenges and transitions of their higher education experience. Such commitment is underpinned by a strong learner support team, through creation of a positive social experience, extending the repertoire and reach of generic skills-oriented modules (e.g. service learning, personal and professional development, and leadership and communication), through the development of specific supports for first year students in their transition to become self-directed learners and the development of a forum for mature learners. An enhanced student support and induction programme has been developed to cater for international students transitioning to life in Ireland and NCI.

With respect to **excellence in teaching** a focus is placed on maintaining and improving the quality and effectiveness of teaching based on learner centred principles and values. This is promoted by various methods which foster learning through inquiry, activity and engagement. Teaching styles within NCI focus on the nurturing of scholarly reflection on the practice of teaching and the development of

critical thinkers. NCI is also particularly active in harnessing and leveraging new technologies to support learning.

With respect to the **quality of assessment** a key aim is to consistently improve assessment practices through innovation. To achieve this aim, the latest technologies are employed within assessment and an effort is made to assess learning outcomes at both programme and module levels in a range of traditional and creative ways. All of the programmes are characterised by the use of both summative and formative assessments.

Research and scholarship at NCI shape and influence learning and teaching strategies across all programmes. Faculty are supported and encouraged to embrace both research and scholarship, and the college is committed to the development of a lifelong learning stance for all staff. The strong academic underpinnings of specific modules are enhanced by the quality of the practitioner experience that is harnessed through associate faculty and guest lecture programmes.

### **2.1.6 Research Activity at NCI**

In recent years NCI has made some significant changes to re-energise its research agenda. These changes have created a research environment consistent with a dynamic third level institution that recognises and prioritises the importance of research and scholarship, not only in terms of its contribution to the national economy and enterprise agenda but also to the quality of its learning and teaching.

NCI's research strategy is currently constructed around four key research clusters and a comprehensive Knowledge Transfer and IP Strategy. The introduction of the psychology programme has gone hand-in-hand with increased research activity within the discipline. Some more information specifically relevant to the research activity among staff in the psychology programme is detailed in section 2.4.2

#### **2.1.6.1 Research Structure**

The Vice-President for Academic Affairs and Research is responsible for the co-ordination of all research activity conducted by the College including taught level 9 programmes with a strong research element, as well as Masters by research and PhD programmes. The VP is supported in this remit by the Deans and Vice Deans of both schools and by the Research Committee.

The College has also established an Ethics Committee for research as well as an IP Committee to oversee the Knowledge Transfer Strategy (KTS). Further details on the ethics committee and process is outlined below.

#### **2.1.6.2 Ethics Sub-Committee**

All research involving human participants that is conducted by students or staff at the National College of Ireland should be done so in an ethical manner. The College has therefore established an Ethics Committee, which acts as a sub-committee of the Research Committee, to ensure that ethical principles pertaining to research involving human participants are upheld and adhered to. All researchers intending to use human participants as part of their projects are thus required to reflect upon any potential ethical issues and submit their research proposals for ethical review before commencing data collection.

The Ethics Committee reviews all research proposals posing ethical risk to the participants involved, however the decision as to whether projects pose ethical risk is firstly made via the appropriate Filter Committee which operates at School level. In the case of the BA (Hons) Psychology this is a review by the psychology filter ethics committee. The Filter Committees may review and approve research proposals which are of low ethical risk, while referring those of high ethical risk to be considered by

the Ethics Committee. In general students are advised to avoid any research which might impact upon any of the specified vulnerable groups or any research that might involve deception.

Students are required to complete a Human Participants Ethical Review Application Form as part of their final project proposal submission. Failure to complete the form will result in the student not be allocated a supervisor.

## **2.2 Quality Assurance**

Whilst effective quality assurance is an institutional wide responsibility, the Director of Quality Assurance and Statistical Services (DQASS) is responsible for ensuring that the policies and procedures are effective at all times. The DQASS ensures that a culture of continuous improvement is fostered within the College and that College managers are complying with the standards as laid down in the quality assurance system. The DQASS reports to the Vice President of Academic Affairs & Research (VP) and has the authority to report Quality Assurance related issues directly to the President of the College.

NCI has agreed its quality assurance procedures with QQI and with the Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (CIPD). Statutory institutional review by QQI took place in 2010 where the College's quality assurance procedures were deemed to be 'substantively effective'. The College has demonstrated progress in improving its procedures which has been validated by the granting by QQI of devolution of validation sub-processes in 2011.

Other external reviews of programmes have taken place. The CIPD undertook its quinquennial centre and programmatic review in February 2013. This covered all programmes in the HRM area that lead to CIPD awards or have CIPD recognition.

The Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI) granted recognition to the College's BA (Hons) in Psychology in 2014.

### **2.2.1 Feedback Mechanisms**

The College quality assurance system is supported through the various support and feedback mechanisms, such as committee structures, and instruments, such as surveys and more detailed reviews of service and support functions. The Services Quality Assurance Framework was introduced in 2011 and has since then reviewed the Library & Information Services (2011/12), Student Support & Careers Services (2012/13) functions as well as the assessment process (2013/14). Reports from these processes can be made available to the panel during the visit. The International Office is currently undertaking its review and will complete in Semester 1, 2017/18.

Students are surveyed on completion of each module. This is carried out centrally via the QASS office using a hybrid online and scanned system. Each lecturer receives a copy of their modular feedback which is then discussed with their Dean of School at development meetings. NCI commenced participation in the National Student Survey in 2013/14. Response rates for online surveys are low and the survey instrument itself requires revision. Whilst wishing to retain the granularity afforded by these internal systems, care has to be taken not to over survey the students leading to survey fatigue.

### **2.2.2 Review of QA policies**

As a result of the publication of QQI's revised core and topic specific quality assurance guidelines, the College has taken the opportunity to undertake a complete review of all of its procedures. Whilst policy and procedure is updated on an incremental basis, this is seen as an opportunity to reflect the College's growth and structural change over the past 10 years. This review has commenced with a view to completion in September 2017.

## 2.3 School of Business at NCI

The School of Business has undergone a radical transformation in the last number of years. This transformation is most noticeable in terms of the number of new programmes on offer, particularly at Level 9 and in terms of the profile of the faculty employed within the School itself. Table 1 below shows the range of programmes offered by the School, ranging from CIPD programmes to level 9 masters degrees.

**Table 1: School of Business Courses and Enrolments 2016/2017**

| Level | Course Title                                                 | Credit | Course Duration      | No Enrolments |
|-------|--------------------------------------------------------------|--------|----------------------|---------------|
| 06    | Certificate in First Line Management                         | 30     | 1                    | 20            |
|       | Certificate in Trade Union Studies                           | 60     | 1                    | 45            |
|       | Higher Certificate in Business                               | 120    | 2                    | 119           |
|       | Diploma in Marketing Advertising, Public Relations and Sales |        | 1                    | 20            |
|       |                                                              |        | <b>Total Level 6</b> | <b>204</b>    |
| 07    | CIPD Award in Coaching and Consulting                        | 6      | 1                    | 21            |
|       | CIPD Award in Employment Law and Employee Relations          | 6      | 1                    | 81            |
|       | CIPD Award in Digital and Blended Learning                   | 6      | 1                    | 6             |
|       | CIPD Award in Reward Management                              | 6      | 1                    | 6             |
|       | CIPD Certificate in Learning and Development                 | 6      | 1                    | 10            |
|       | CIPD Certificate in HRM                                      | 16     | 1                    | 209           |
|       | CIPD Diploma in HRM                                          | 22     | 1                    | 217           |
|       | Certificate in Retail Management                             | 30     | 1                    | 40            |
|       | CIPD Diploma in Learning and Development                     | 48     | 1                    | 21            |
|       | Diploma in Retail Management                                 | 60     | 1                    | 2             |
|       | BA in Management Practice                                    | 180    | 3                    | 8             |
|       | BA in Human Resource Management                              | 180    | 3                    | 1             |
|       |                                                              |        | <b>Total Level 7</b> | <b>622</b>    |
| 08    | APP in General Insurance                                     | 10     | 1                    | 34            |
|       | APP in Private Medical Insurance                             | 10     | 1                    | 2             |
|       | IIPM Law & Governance for Trustees                           | 10     | 1                    | 20            |
|       | Certificate in Workplace Adjudication                        | 10     | 1                    | 14            |
|       | Certificate in Financial Regulation                          | 10     | 1                    | 1             |
|       | Certificate in Business Analysis                             | 15     | 1                    | 105           |
|       | Certificate in Employability Services                        | 30     | 1                    | 66            |
|       | Certificate in Digital Marketing                             | 30     | 1                    | 142           |
|       | Certificate in Credit Union Compliance and Risk              | 30     | 1                    | 53            |
|       | Higher Diploma in Business in Finance -part time             | 60     | 1                    | 9             |
|       | Diploma in Pensions Management & Policy - Online             | 60     | 2                    | 47            |
|       | BA Honours in Business Management                            | 180    | 2                    | 70            |
|       | BA Honours in Accounting                                     | 180    | 3                    | 42            |
|       | BA (Hons) in HRM Strategy and Practice                       | 180    | 2                    | 273           |
|       | BA (Honours) in Marketing Practice                           | 180    | 3                    | 183           |
|       | BA (Honours) in Human Resource Management                    | 180    | 3                    | 159           |
|       | BA (Honours) in Business - Evening                           | 180    | 4                    | 53            |
|       | BA (Honours) in Business                                     | 180    | 3                    | 433           |
|       | BA (Honours) in Accounting and Finance                       | 180    | 3                    | 78            |
|       | Bachelor of Arts (Hons) Psychology                           | 180    | 3                    | 168           |

| Level | Course Title                                                 | Credit | Course Duration         | No Enrolments |
|-------|--------------------------------------------------------------|--------|-------------------------|---------------|
|       | BA (Hons) Psychology - Evening                               | 180    | 4                       | 33            |
|       |                                                              |        | <b>Total Level 8</b>    | <b>1985</b>   |
| 09    | Certificate in Project Management and Implementation Science | 10     | 1                       | 3             |
|       | Certificate in Non-Profit Leadership and Management          | 30     | 1                       | 29            |
|       | Post Graduate Diploma in Arts in Human Resource Management   | 60     | 1                       | 50            |
|       | MA in Human Resource Management - Part-time                  | 90     | 2                       | 43            |
|       | MSc International Business - part time                       | 90     | 2                       | 13            |
|       | MSc in Finance                                               | 90     | 1                       | 16            |
|       | MSc in Finance - part time                                   | 90     | 2                       | 9             |
|       | MSc in Management                                            | 90     | 1                       | 43            |
|       | MSc in Management - part time                                | 90     | 2                       | 37            |
|       | MSc in Marketing - full time                                 | 90     | 1                       | 18            |
|       | MSc in Marketing - part time                                 | 90     | 2                       | 34            |
|       | MSc in Non Profit Management                                 | 90     | 2                       | 6             |
|       | Master of Business Administration                            | 90     | 2                       | 50            |
|       | MA in Human Resource Management                              | 90     | 1                       | 40            |
|       |                                                              |        | <b>Total Level 9</b>    | <b>391</b>    |
|       |                                                              |        | <b>Total Enrolments</b> | <b>3202</b>   |

The School currently has a faculty of 23 full-time academic members, 3 permanent part time academic staff and an administrative support team consisting of 6 staff. Within the academic faculty 12 hold a PhD qualification with a further 2 members of faculty approaching the final stages of their programme of study. The increase in the number of PhD qualified faculty is deemed necessary to support the continued and on-going expansion of postgraduate programmes within the School. The School is committed in that regard to appointing faculty with PhDs to full-time, permanent posts. Within the psychology programme the vast majority of faculty hold PhDs as can be seen in Section 2.4.2.

## 2.4 BA (Hons) in Psychology

### 2.4.1 Aims and rationale for programme

Since its initial validation, the core objective of the BA (Hons) in Psychology has been to provide learners with a solid grounding in the discipline of psychology. As such, the programme aims to present learners with a comprehensive foundation in the principles and practice of psychology, underpinned by a solid theoretical framework. This necessitates coverage of all the core aspects of psychology including theories, research, and methods.

Beyond this, the programme also provides a range of modules which aim to give learners the opportunity to explore more advanced and specialised aspects of psychology. The aim is to ensure graduates have a comprehensive understanding of key issues and applications of research within such fields of psychology.

Another important objective of the continuing development and delivery of the programme is to ensure that all guidelines for PSI accreditation are met so that graduates will be equipped to pursue further postgraduate training in psychology. A brief overview of these requirements is given in section 2.4.2.

A particular strength of the programme is the emphasis placed on applied and practical skills throughout the degree. Our programme focuses on the various applications of psychology, which is

reflected throughout the range of modules offered, as well as in their teaching, learning, and assessment strategies. For example, as evidenced in our later comparative analysis of other psychology programmes, we are the only psychology provider in the country to offer a dedicated module in *Coaching Psychology* which revolves around the development of a range of transferable skills in group work, communication, leadership, and problem solving. Students also develop an in-depth knowledge of research methods and statistical skills throughout all stages of the programme. This knowledge goes beyond abstract and decontextualized skills to a focus on real world applications of this knowledge.

Practical assessments are embedded into a range of modules with students having the opportunity to conduct field work (*Applied Introduction and History of Psychology*), make judgements based on child observations (*Lifespan Development*), perform experiments investigating cognition (*Cognitive Psychology*), collect physiological data (*Biological Basis of Behaviour*) and administer a range of psychological tests and assessments (*Social psychology, Personality and Intelligence*). The dedicated module in *Psychology Labs* gives students a further opportunity to hone their knowledge and skills of practical applications of research in a number of areas in psychology. As part of our programmatic review proposals we have expanded on the applied nature of the programme through newly proposed modules which are described later. For example, a newly proposed module in *Health Psychology* requires students to design a health intervention which emphasises the applications of the discipline. Furthermore, in newly proposed elective modules such as *Educational Psychology* students get the opportunity to work in applied developmental settings which is a unique feature of this programme. Our proposed revisions to the programme also give students the option to study a range of applied business modules. For example, should they choose a business-related elective such as *Entrepreneurship*, students will get the opportunity to work with real-world companies in developing and evaluating a case. Taken together, the experience accrued by students throughout the programme makes a strong contribution to the development of a range of transferrable skills which are detailed further in Section 5.4.3.

#### **2.4.2 Professional body requirements**

The BA (Hons) Psychology was accredited by the Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI) in February 2014. As this operates on a 5 year cycle, the programme is due for reaccreditation again in February 2019. The PSI has a number of strict guidelines governing the accreditation of psychology programmes so, prior to initial accreditation, the programme team acted to ensure that these were met. For example, the course structure ensures that core aspects of psychology (e.g. social psychology, lifespan development, cognitive psychology and biological psychology) are covered, as well as providing learners with a thorough training in research methods and statistics, as well as sufficient practical experimental work. PSI also requires that students on the programme have access to resources conducive to conducting practical work, and that they are instructed by highly qualified staff in accordance with a specific staff: student ratio. It is vital that these requirements are met in the future planning of the programme, so this has been a very important consideration for the programmatic review.

#### **2.4.3 Staff on the psychology programme**

When the BA (Hons) in Psychology was first launched in 2012/2013, it was then delivered by a small complement of staff, including a number of existing staff in the School of Business and others who were newly recruited for the purposes of the programme. As can be seen from the registration figures detailed later in section 3, the programme initially had a small intake of students however these numbers have increased significantly in recent years, with a current study body of just under 200. This includes two cohorts of part-time students as the programme has also been delivered on a part-time basis since the academic year 2015/2016.



To facilitate the growing student numbers, in the five years since the programme has been running, the programme team has also grown significantly, with a number of expert research-active staff recruited across a wide variety of sub-disciplines in psychology. An overview of staff in the department along with their core research interests is detailed below, with full CVs of these staff members included in the Appendix 3.

Staff lecturing on the programme are listed in alphabetical order in the table below. It should be noted that in addition to full time staff members, the team also draws on the expertise of a range of associate faculty members who are recruited on a part-time basis as required. These are also included in the table below. A list of the modules that staff are currently teaching is also included here with mode of delivery, either full-time (FT) or part-time (PT), indicated as appropriate. As can be seen most lecturers deliver modules on both the full-time and part-time deliveries of the programme however it should also be noted that, since the part-time programme is only in its second year, not all modules are delivered at present on a part-time basis.

**Table 2: Staff members in the psychology department**

| Staff member        | Role                                                    | Research interests                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Modules currently taught academic year 2016/2017                                                                                      |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Dr Rachael Dillon   | Associate Faculty lecturer                              | Cognitive remediation training, psychosis, health behaviour models. coaching psychology                                                                                                                                                  | Coaching psychology (FT), Workplace psychology (FT)                                                                                   |
| Dr April Hargreaves | Lecturer, Director of First year                        | Neuropsychology, cognitive genomics, psychosis, cognition, social cognition, cognitive remediation therapy                                                                                                                               | Applied introduction and history of psychology (PT), Social psychology (FT& PT), Psychology of Learning and Behavioural Analysis (FT) |
| Dr Philip Hyland    | Senior Lecturer, Director of Second year                | Psychological responses to trauma; PTSD and Complex PTSD; cognitive-behavioural models of psychopathology; criminal psychology.                                                                                                          | Introduction to statistics (FT), Applied statistics (FT/PT), Abnormal psychology (FT), Criminal psychology (FT)                       |
| Dr Grainne Kent     | Lecturer and Early Learning Initiative (ELI) researcher | Behavioural Science, Applied Behaviour Analysis, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Child Development, Language Development, Developmental Delays, Parenting, Literacy and Numeracy, Educational Disadvantage, Early Intervention and Prevention. | Lifespan development (FT & PT), Advanced developmental psychology (FT)                                                                |
| Michelle Kehoe      | Lecturer                                                | Organisational behaviour, personality and the impact of styles on behaviour, socialisation of employees and students.                                                                                                                    | Personality and individual differences (FT)*                                                                                          |
| Dr Rebecca Maguire  | Lecturer, Programme Director                            | Cognitive and experimental psychology, surprise, creativity, discourse, language, conceptual representation, reasoning, learning, engagement, quality of life                                                                            | Introduction to research methods (PT), Cognitive psychology (FT & PT), Advanced cognitive psychology and                              |

|                     |                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                            |
|---------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                     |                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | neuroscience (FT)*, Final project (FT)                                                                                                     |
| Niall McGowan       | Psychology Technician            | Experimental neuropsychology, chronobiology, circadian neuroscience; symptomatology of common neuropsychiatric disorders, such as major depression, bipolar disorder, general anxiety disorder, and attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder. | Psychology labs (PT)                                                                                                                       |
| Dr Joanna Power     | Lecturer, Director of Third Year | Neuropsychology, Cognitive psychology, Psychology of Ageing, impact of health behaviours (diet, physical activity, sleep), statistical modelling, qualitative research methods, mental health (loneliness and social isolation)               | Applied introduction and history of psychology (FT), Applied research methods (FT), Biological Basis of Behaviour (FT & PT)                |
| Dr Fearghal O'Brien | Lecturer                         | Health risk behaviours (e.g. dangerous driving, substance use, unsafe sex), Traffic Psychology, Impulsivity, Implicit Cognition, Adolescent Development, Longitudinal Methods, and Attitudes & Decision Making.                               | Introduction to research methods (FT), Introduction to statistics (PT), Personality and individual differences (PT)*, Cyberpsychology (FT) |

\*Please note that these modules are renamed in the newly proposed programme. Specifically, Personality and Individual Differences is to be renamed Personality and Intelligence. While Advanced Cognitive Psychology and Neuroscience is to become the Psychology of Thinking. These proposed changes are detailed later in the report.

This complement of staff has ensured that students on the psychology programme are instructed by highly qualified staff with expertise in a range of subject specialisms. Furthermore, the recruitment of this team has greatly strengthened the research profile of the college as a whole. For example, to illustrate a snapshot of research activity, in the last two years (2015-present) psychology staff have collectively published an excess of 70 journal articles and approximately 50 conference papers (see staff CVs in Appendix 3). In addition, the team actively pursues research funding with a number of successful grant applications secured. For example, one staff member, Dr Philip Hyland, was recently co-recipient of a Horizon 2020 award in excess of €3 million for the investigation of psychotraumatology, while many other members have been recipients or applicants of funding from other agencies (e.g. the Centre of Ageing Research and Development in Ireland, the Irish Research Council).

#### **2.4.3.1 Other staff members and support**

In addition to the lecturing staff, the programme is supported by a dedicated psychology technician (to provide technical and practical support in relation to research), and a programme coordinator (to provide administrative support to staff and students). Students also have access to a range of support services that are shared by the college including learning support, maths/statistical support and library support. An overview of facilities and services can be found in the Appendix 2

#### **2.4.4 Physical resources**

The programme is delivered in NCI's IFSC campus and has a variety of resource requirements depending on the module in question. For example, many of the statistics and research-based

modules require access to a computer lab so the programme uses a dedicated 34-seater psychology lab for these modules (here, it is standard practice that larger cohorts are split into smaller groups for practical sessions). Within this lab, students have access to specialist statistical and experimental software including SPSS, eprime and PEBL. In addition, the programme has dedicated use of another laboratory for the purpose of conducting psychophysiological experiments. This includes a Powerlab system which is used for the collection of physiological data and forms part of the assessment strategy for the module *Biological Basis of Behaviour*, and in final year research projects as required. Staff and students on the programme also have access to a number of small experimental testing rooms. A full list of these resources is detailed in section 9 of the Final Year Project handbook which is included in the Appendix 4b.

It is acknowledged however that further investment in a greater range of experimental equipment may be necessary as the programme grows. As part of the review process potential directions for growth in this capacity have been discussed. For example, in conjunction with the School of Computing in NCI, the psychology programme has recently invested in eye-tracking and observational equipment which are intended to broaden the scope of research-related activities in the college.

## **2.5 External Links with the Programme**

The programme team regularly draws on the expertise of external individuals and institutions to strengthen programme delivery in both a formal and informal capacity. A summary of the key stakeholders is given below:

### **2.5.1 Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI)**

As our professional body, the programme team is in regular contact with PSI in order to ensure that accreditation guidelines are met. Beyond this however, the college has liaised with PSI in the hosting of events (e.g. the Psychology Society at NCI recently hosted a talk “A day in the life of a clinical psychologist” in conjunction with PSI), and, in a recent meeting with the current CEO of PSI, Terri Morrissey, a number of other collaborative possibilities were discussed. In addition, students on the programme are encouraged to attend and present at the annual Psychology Students of Ireland conference, while staff members contribute to PSI conferences and events whenever possible.

### **2.5.2 Early Learning Initiative**

In terms of the delivery of the BA (Hons) in Psychology programme, there are also structured collaborations with the Early Learning Initiative (ELI) who provide input into the developmental psychology modules, in particular within the stage 3 *Advanced Developmental Psychology* module. The ELI was initially developed to address the problem of educational underachievement in marginalised communities. Developed in collaboration with the local community; the ELI aims to address disadvantage through a comprehensive programme that provides support for children; their parents, families, and educators, from early years up to Third Level.

For the past few years, the ELI has operated as a pilot programme. Over the next five years it is ELI’s intention to grow and develop, broadening both its reach and impact. It is within this context that collaborations have been made between ELI and the psychology programme at NCI. For example, students on this module were given instruction on Early Intervention and Prevention initiatives operating in Dublin’s inner city aiming at improving outcomes for children and their families, while the home visiting team from ELI spoke to students about the importance of supporting parents to enhance the home learning environment in the early years. This collaborative arrangement gives students opportunity to engage in applied practical work and the option of pursuing research projects in the area of developmental psychology.

### 2.5.3 Guest lecturers and research collaborators

In addition to the above arrangements, external researchers and practitioners are often invited to speak to students both within specialist modules and as part of extra-curricular events. These speakers include a range of internationally-acclaimed researchers who have provided students with insights into cutting-edge research in their specialist areas. Guest lecturers on the programme to date have included: Professor Daniel Boduszek (University of Huddersfield, UK) and Dr. Agata Debowska (Liverpool John Moores University, UK) who lectured students in the module *Criminal Psychology*, Ms Louisa Lorenz (University of Zurich, Switzerland) who delivered a lecture on Adjustment Disorders as part of the *Abnormal Psychology* module, Dr Maria Pertl, who delivered a lecture on research methods in psychology as part of the *Introduction to Research Methods* module, and Dr Des O'Mahony from ERC Ireland, as well as Ms Iseult Cremen of Trinity College Dublin, who both delivered lectures in *Cyberpsychology*.

The college has also hosted a number of public talks in the area of psychology as a part of a series entitled "*In the Psychologists' Chair*". A list of such speakers and the title of their talks is outlined in the table below. As can be seen, these speakers come from a wide range of backgrounds in psychology, with a diverse assortment of topics discussed.

**Table 3: Selection of public talks in psychology hosted at NCI**

| Speaker                             | Role                                                                                   | Title of talk                                                                              |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Dr Tony Bates                       | CEO of Headstrong                                                                      | Who am I, where am I and why am I here?                                                    |
| Dr Louise McHugh                    | Senior Lecturer in Psychology, University College Dublin                               | A bottom up empirical approach to the self and mindfulness.                                |
| Dr Daniel Boduszek                  | Professor in Criminal Psychology, University of Huddersfield                           | The Psychology of Homicidal Behaviour                                                      |
| Prof Ivor Browne                    | Former Chief Psychiatrist Eastern Health Board. Prof Emeritus UCD                      | What is Madness?                                                                           |
| Dr Conor McGuckin                   | Assistant Professor of Education at Trinity College Dublin                             | Applying Psychology to Education                                                           |
| Prof Ian Robertson                  | Politics in the Brain: dictators, democracy, demonstrations and the struggle for power | Politics in the Brain: dictators, democracy, demonstrations and the struggle for power.    |
| Dr Cathal McCrory                   | Research Fellow at Trinity College Dublin TILDA                                        | Loneliness and the Heart: Social disadvantage, social isolation and cardiovascular health. |
| Dave Malone                         | 4 Time Paralympic athlete and Paralympic performance manager                           | Winning. The mindset for success                                                           |
| Dr Suzanne Guerin                   | Senior Lecturer in Psychology, University College Dublin                               | The reality of cyber bullying                                                              |
| Professor Mark Shevlin and Dr Jamie | Specialists in psychological trauma and mental health, University of Ulster            | Modelling Madness. The role of early adversity in the onset of psychotic experiences       |

| Speaker                           | Role                                                                                         | Title of talk                                                                             |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Murphy University of Ulster       |                                                                                              |                                                                                           |
| Professor Sheila Greene           | Professor of Childhood Research and Former Director of the Children's Research Centre at TCD | Childhood Development. 'Just how important are the early years?                           |
| Tina Maguire and Felicity Kennedy | Counselling Psychologists, Women's Therapy Centre                                            | Therapeutic work with complex trauma. Drawing from the work of the Women's Therapy Centre |

In addition, all members of the psychology team are involved in a number of external research collaborations (see staff C

Vs in the Appendix 3 for more detail).

#### 2.5.4 Maynooth University

At present, three graduates of NCI's BA (Hons) in Psychology are registered on a PhD programme in Maynooth University and are being co-supervised by NCI faculty (Dr Philip Hyland, and Dr Joanna Power) and Maynooth University faculty (Prof. Andrew Coogan, and Dr Michelle Kelly). Under the current arrangements, students have the option of registering for the PhD in Psychology at Maynooth University and to receive joint supervision from faculty in both institutions. The programme is a three- or four-year course depending upon the level of entry. Students without an MSc/MA qualification enter the first year as an MRes student and transfer to the PhD programme for the next three years. Students with an MSc/MA qualification can enter directly onto the PhD programme. The Maynooth PhD programme requires students to undertake a series of taught modules over the course of their degree whereby they need to accumulate 30 ECTS credits in order to graduate. It is hope that these collaborations will continue over the coming years.

#### 2.5.5 Volunteering opportunities for students

Students are actively encouraged to engage in volunteering activities outside of the college learning environment. Though this is not a formal requirement of the programme, the value of gaining additional applied experience is strongly emphasised by the programme team. Where possible students are made aware of opportunities for volunteering with organisations such as Alzheimer's Café, Dublin Rape Crisis Centre, Spirasi, Aware, Childline, Samaritans, Pieta House, among others.

Members of the psychology team are actively involved with some of these organisations. For example, Dr Philip Hyland collaborates closely with the **Dublin Rape Crisis Centre** (victims of sexual assault), and **Spirasi** (refugee and asylum seekers in Ireland who have been subjected to torture and extreme interpersonal violence). Participation with such non-academic partner organisations further enhances the development and delivery of modules on the programme, as clinical staff from both organisations speak to the students as part of the Abnormal Psychology module. Utilizing these collaborations, students are encouraged to volunteer with both organisations throughout the course of their degree. Through volunteerism with the organisations, students have the opportunity to build relationships with the clinical staff, and the individuals who attend these organisations, which in turn can open opportunities for research work that can comprise their final year project.

Similarly, Dr Joanna Power collaborates with **Alzheimer Café** which is an informal support group for anyone affected by dementia. The "cafe" is so-called because guests are invited to attend a cafe setting once a month, with their loved ones, to have refreshments and listen to a guest speaker discuss an aspect of dementia, dementia care, or related topics. Joanna was a founding member of the cafe in Glasnevin in 2012 and has been co-running it with a multidisciplinary committee since (including 2 psychologists and a psychotherapist). Students are encouraged from 1st year to volunteer, especially if they are interested in pursuing a career in clinical psychology. The cafe represents one way in which students can gain valuable experience with families affected by dementia. All student volunteers are supervised by the committee, and are encouraged to engage to the extent that they feel comfortable. For some volunteers, this means pouring coffee, while others are more comfortable sitting and talking with the cafe visitors. In attending the cafe, volunteers get an understanding of the diverse community applications of psychology.

Other volunteering opportunities for students can be facilitated through **Niteline**, which is a listening, support and information service run by students for students. As indicated by Niteline themselves all volunteers develop valuable skills, offering a number of personal and professional opportunities. Skills developed from volunteering for this service include:

- Active listening
- Leadership skills
- Understanding others
- Understanding a diverse range of issues
- Event management
- Communication and public-speaking skills
- Teamwork, and,
- Emotional resilience

Such skills that are developed during volunteering complement the transferable skills achieved by learners on the BA (Hons) Psychology programme (see later Section 5.4.3). Opportunities such as this are highlighted by the college, the careers service, and the programme team.

## 2.6 Target learners

The BA (Hons) in Psychology was originally intended to be targeted at school-leavers and applicants through the CAO system who wish to pursue an undergraduate degree in psychology. However other target learners include mature and international students who meet the requirements of entry onto the course. The development of the part-time programme was intended to attract mature learners onto the programme. A more detailed analysis of the learners on the programme and their characteristics can be seen in Section 3 below.

### 3 Baseline qualitative and quantitative information on the BA (Hons) in Psychology programme

This section provides an analysis of both quantitative and qualitative information for the programme. The section is broadly divided into the following categories: an analysis of enrolment and applications, characteristics of learners on the programme, an analysis of attrition, transfer, progression and completion statistics, an analysis of grades and QQI award classifications, destination of graduates, external examiner reports and analysis, as well as an overview of the current structure and workload involved in the programme.

#### 3.1 Enrolment and application analysis

An analysis of applications and acceptances onto the full-time programme can be seen in Table 4 below. This table also includes an analysis of the range of CAO points achieved by students.

**Table 4: CAO application analysis for the full-time BA (Hons) in Psychology**

| CAO Analysis     |              |     |        |                      |            |                         |              |
|------------------|--------------|-----|--------|----------------------|------------|-------------------------|--------------|
| Year             | CAO Analysis |     |        | Offers through CAO   |            | Acceptances through CAO |              |
|                  | Min          | Max | Median | 1 <sup>st</sup> pref | Tot offers | 1 <sup>st</sup> pref    | Total accept |
| <b>2012/2013</b> | 170          | 435 | 330    | 11                   | 29         | 8                       | 13           |
| <b>2013/2014</b> | 225          | 479 | 310    | 29                   | 94         | 15                      | 46           |
| <b>2014/2015</b> | 245          | 485 | 345    | 25                   | 84         | 14                      | 43           |
| <b>2015/2016</b> | 260          | 450 | 360    | 29                   | 94         | 31                      | 62           |
| <b>2016/2017</b> | 270          | 470 | 380    | 46                   | 114        | 38                      | 76           |

As can be seen here, since the first intake of students in 2012/2013, both the CAO entry points and the number of applicants listing the programme as their first preference has increased. In 2012/2013, there were only 13 places accepted through the CAO system with the remaining 16 accepted places coming from applicants who met the course requirements outside of the CAO system. In our last intake of students (2016/2017), there were 76 acceptances through the CAO alone. This is clear evidence of the growing popularity of the programme. The spike in CAO points between 2013/2014 and 2014/2015 was most likely due to the accreditation of the programme from PSI which may have made the programme more attractive to prospective students.

The programme has been attracting interest from international and mature students, as can be seen in the table below. A more detailed analysis of the characteristics of learners is presented in section 3.2.

**Table 5: Mature and international applications for the BA (Hons) Psychology programme**

| Mature and international analysis |              |             |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|-------------|
| Year                              | Applications | Acceptances |
|                                   |              |             |

|                  |           |          |
|------------------|-----------|----------|
| <b>2012/2013</b> | <b>11</b> | <b>5</b> |
| <b>2013/2014</b> | 20        | 5        |
| <b>2014/2015</b> | <b>20</b> | <b>6</b> |
| <b>2015/2016</b> | 16        | 2        |
| <b>2016/2017</b> | <b>25</b> | <b>9</b> |

Interest in the part-time programme has also been increasing; however, it must be noted that, while in both 2015/2016 and 2016/2017 there was a high number of initial applications, many of these did not translate into final acceptances. This was mainly due to withdrawals of applications, or the applicants not meeting the entry requirements. Many candidates were invited to interview to establish if they were deemed suitable for entry onto the programme and the majority of those who attended interview were accepted.

**Table 6: Part-time applications**

| Year             | Applications | Acceptances |
|------------------|--------------|-------------|
| <b>2015/2016</b> | 67           | 22          |
| <b>2016/2017</b> | 76           | 21          |

As can be seen in more detail below our analysis shows that we are attracting three different groups of learners onto the programme. The full-time BA (Hons) programme primarily attracts school leavers, most of who are recruited through the CAO system, however there are also a number of international and mature students that choose this route. In contrast, the part-time programme primarily attracts mature learners and/or those returning to education. A full analysis of current learners on the programme can be seen in more detail below.

## 3.2 Characteristics of learners

### 3.2.1 Gender and age breakdown

The table below displays the breakdown of the full-time and part-time programmes by the age and gender of students.

**Table 7: Age and gender by cohort for BA (Hons) Psychology Full-Time**

|                    | 2012/2013 |      | 2013/2014 |      | 2014/2015 |      | 2015/2016 |      | 2016/2017 |      | Total | %    |
|--------------------|-----------|------|-----------|------|-----------|------|-----------|------|-----------|------|-------|------|
| Age                | Female    | Male | Female    | Male | Female    | Male | Female    | Male | Female    | Male |       |      |
| <b>17-22</b>       | 4         | 0    | 22        | 12   | 38        | 18   | 79        | 26   | 109       | 38   | 346   | 70%  |
| <b>23-29</b>       | 10        | 11   | 11        | 18   | 14        | 18   | 10        | 12   | 9         | 5    | 118   | 24%  |
| <b>30 and over</b> | 1         | 2    | 4         | 4    | 3         | 4    | 2         | 4    | 2         | 4    | 30    | 6%   |
| <b>Total N</b>     | 15        | 13   | 37        | 34   | 55        | 40   | 91        | 42   | 120       | 47   | 494   | 100% |
| <b>%</b>           | 54%       | 46%  | 52%       | 48%  | 58%       | 42%  | 68%       | 32%  | 72%       | 28%  |       |      |

**Table 8: Age and Gender by cohort for BA (Hons) Psychology Part-Time**

|              | 2015/2016 |      | 2016/2017 |      | Total | %  |
|--------------|-----------|------|-----------|------|-------|----|
| Age          | Female    | Male | Female    | Male |       |    |
| <b>17-22</b> | 2         | 0    | 1         | 0    | 3     | 6% |



|             |     |     |     |     |    |      |
|-------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|----|------|
| 23-29       | 7   | 3   | 11  | 3   | 24 | 49%  |
| 30 and over | 5   | 2   | 10  | 5   | 22 | 45%  |
| Total N     | 14  | 5   | 22  | 8   | 49 | 100% |
| %           | 74% | 26% | 73% | 27% |    |      |

As can be seen from the tables above, the majority of students across all five full-time cohorts are under the age of 22, with only 6% of full-time students over the age of 30. This pattern is reversed for the part-time programme, where nearly all students are above the age of 23, with nearly half over the age of 30. In all cohorts, there are more females than males and the number of females studying the full-time degree has increased steadily from 54% in 2012/2013 to 72% in 2016/2017. This is reflective of international trends where psychology students are more likely to be female (e.g. [Willyard, 2011](#)).

### 3.2.2 Prior qualifications and experience on entry

While the vast majority of full-time students registered through the CAO system, mature students applying for the course do so on the basis of a range of qualifications and work experience accrued. A number of applicants to the part-time programme already held level 8 degrees in a variety of disciplines (e.g. English Literature, Nursing, Science, Management, English and History), with some even having previous postgraduate qualifications (e.g. MBA, Masters in Education). However, the majority of part-time students did not hold any third level qualifications on entry. Many of those on the part-time programme were (and still are) in full-time employment in various sectors such as education, health and business. This suggests that the part-time BA in psychology appeals to learners from a wide range of backgrounds. From interviews with these students, it is apparent that some are motivated by seeking a change in their current career direction, while others are pursuing study out of interest alone.

### 3.2.3 International students

While the vast majority of students enrolled in the programme are Irish nationals, the psychology programme appears to be an attractive option for overseas students as evidenced by the steady increase in international students illustrated in the table below.

**Table 9: International Participation Breakdown**

|                | 2012/2013 | 2013/2014 | 2014/2015 | 2015/2016 | 2016/2017 | Total |
|----------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------|
| American       |           | 1         |           |           |           | 1     |
| Brazil         |           |           | 1         |           | 3         | 4     |
| Chinese        |           |           | 1         |           | 2         | 3     |
| Kuwait         |           |           |           | 1         |           | 1     |
| Botswana       |           |           |           | 1         |           | 1     |
| South African  |           |           |           | 1         |           | 1     |
| Nigerian       |           |           |           |           | 1         | 1     |
| Mauritian      |           |           |           | 1         |           | 1     |
| <b>TOTAL N</b> | 0         | 1         | 2         | 4         | 6         | 13    |

Across most programmes within the college, the number of international students has been increasing and this is testament to the growing reputation of the College abroad. However, such an increase is not without its challenges. The College has worked hard to ensure that those international students who attend receive a comprehensive induction covering areas such as language and comprehension, culture, gender norms, role expectations, and plagiarism. Practical orientation is also provided in terms of advice on accommodation, where to shop, modes of transport, etc. Additionally, the International Office has increased the level of pastoral care provided to these students, particularly in the early stages of their settling-in period. Finally, two international peer mentors are appointed to

work with international students around expectations and cultural challenges regarding academic requirements.

### **3.3 Attrition, transfer, progression and completion analysis**

#### **3.3.1 Registration by Programme by Year**

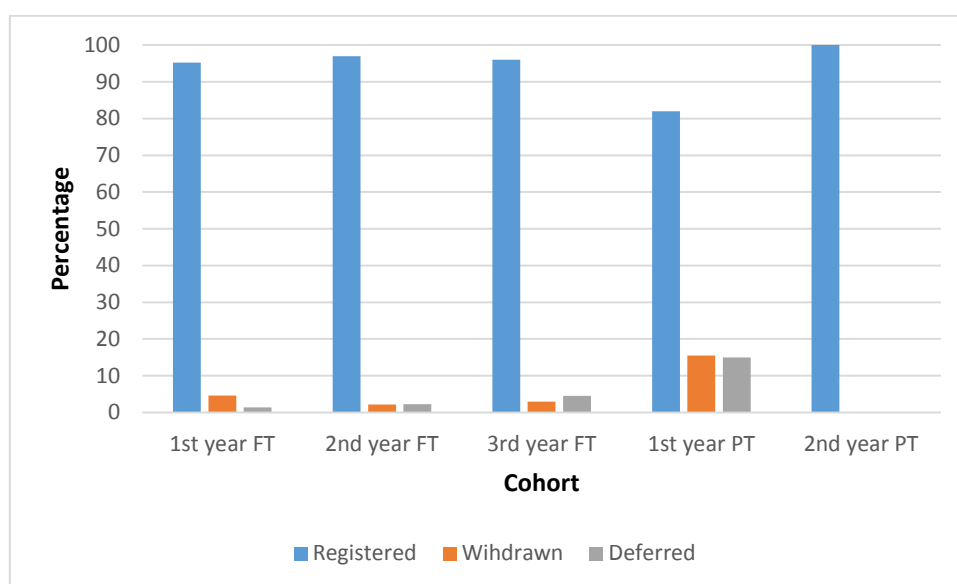
Table 10 shows the registration numbers for each cohort of the full-time and the part-time programme by academic year. The table also includes the number of withdrawals and deferrals at each stage. It should be noted that there may be minor discrepancies between the numbers presented here and the entry level data on learner characteristics presented in section 3.2. Occasionally, a learner may accept the offer of a place without this acceptance materialising into full registration, often due to financial reasons. Additionally, some learners who fail to complete a given stage in an academic year may subsequently reregister for the same stage in a subsequent year. The figures presented here included all students, regardless of their date of entry, who registered for each academic year.

**Table 10: Analysis of registrations, withdrawals and deferrals of students each year including N and percentage for each cohort**

| 2012/2013                                    |               |            |           |          |       | 2013/2014  |           |          |       | 2014/2015  |           |          |       | 2015/2016  |           |          |       | 2016/2017  |           |          |       |
|----------------------------------------------|---------------|------------|-----------|----------|-------|------------|-----------|----------|-------|------------|-----------|----------|-------|------------|-----------|----------|-------|------------|-----------|----------|-------|
|                                              | Year of study | Registered | Withdrawn | Deferred | Total | Registered | Withdrawn | Deferred | Total | Registered | Withdrawn | Deferred | Total | Registered | Withdrawn | Deferred | Total | Registered | Withdrawn | Deferred | Total |
| Bachelor of Arts (Hons) Psychology Full-time | 1 N           | 27         | 2         | -        | 29    | 45         | -         | 1        | 46    | 39         | 4         | 1        | 44    | 63         | 1         | 1        | 65    | 85         | 1         | -        | 86    |
|                                              | %             | 93%        | 7%        | 0%       | 100%  | 98%        | 0%        | 2%       | 100%  | 89%        | 9%        | 2%       | 100%  | 97%        | 1.5%      | 1.5%     | 100%  | 99%        | 1%        | 0%       | 100%  |
|                                              | 2 N           |            |           |          |       | 26         | -         | -        | 26    | 38         | 1         | 1        | 40    | 39         | 1         | 1        | 41    | 54         | 1         | -        | 55    |
|                                              | %             |            |           |          |       | 100%       | 0%        | 0%       | 100%  | 95%        | 2.5%      | 2.5%     | 100%  | 96%        | 2%        | 2%       | 100%  | 98%        | 2%        | 0%       | 100%  |
|                                              | 3 N           |            |           |          |       |            |           |          |       | 21         | -         | 1        | 22    | 31         | 1         | -        | 32    | 26         | -         | 1        | 27    |
|                                              | %             |            |           |          |       |            |           |          |       | 95%        | 0%        | 5%       | 100%  | 97%        | 3%        | 0%       | 100%  | 96%        | 0%        | 4%       | 100%  |
| Bachelor of Arts (Hons) Psychology Evening   | 1 N           |            |           |          |       |            |           |          |       |            |           |          |       | 22         | 3         | -        | 25    | 19         | 5         | 2        | 26    |
|                                              | %             |            |           |          |       |            |           |          |       |            |           |          |       | 88%        | 12%       | 0%       | 100%  | 73%        | 19%       | 8%       | 100%  |
|                                              | 2 N           |            |           |          |       |            |           |          |       |            |           |          |       |            |           |          |       | 14         | -         | -        | 14    |
|                                              | %             |            |           |          |       |            |           |          |       |            |           |          |       |            |           |          |       | 100%       | 0%        | 0%       | 100%  |
| Total                                        | N             | 27         | 2         | -        | 29    | 71         | 0         | 1        | 72    | 98         | 5         | 3        | 106   | 155        | 6         | 2        | 163   | 198        | 7         | 3        | 209   |
|                                              | %             | 93%        | 7%        | 0%       | 100%  | 99%        | 0%        | 1%       | 100%  | 92%        | 5%        | 3%       | 100%  | 95%        | 4%        | 1%       | 100%  | 95%        | 3%        | 2%       | 100%  |

As can be seen from the table above, there has been a significant year-on-year increase in the number of students studying psychology at NCI and there are currently 198 students registered across all cohorts. This increase reflects the growing reputation of the psychology programme at NCI and is particularly enhanced by the quality of the faculty recruited and the PSI accreditation which is very attractive to students in the market.

As would be expected at any third level course of study, there have been some withdrawals from the programme. Generally, the number of withdrawals has been small, with the exception of 2014/2015 where five students withdrew from the full-time programme (four in first year and one in second year). As can be seen in the figure below, the overall proportion of withdrawals and deferrals is small, but there is a higher rate of withdrawal, relatively speaking, from the part-time programme. However, since the part-time programme has been running for just two years, that statistic is based on a very small number of students and should be interpreted cautiously.



**Figure 1: Average proportion of all students who were registered, withdrawn or deferred from the programme by cohort**

Once a student indicates their intention to withdraw from a programme of study, the College seeks to counsel them on the options available and the supports that are in place to assist students struggling with their studies. If a student still wishes to withdraw after receiving this counsel, then the College formally records their reasons. For the Psychology programme, the vast majority of students have withdrawn because they felt that the programme did not suit them or because of financial reasons. For example, three of the five students who withdrew from the programme in 2014/2015 did so for financial reasons and one reported that the course was not suited to them. Withdrawal due to financial reasons is likely to be a more common characteristic of the BA (Hons) Psychology programme than other undergraduate programmes in NCI given that this course is fully self-funded by the students alone (i.e. it does not qualify for funding under the free-fees initiative). The college does offer advice and support for students in financial difficulties but these circumstances are typically beyond the control of the team.

In the part-time programme, the most typical reasons for deferral appear to be personal reasons and the student feeling they are not suited to the programme. Furthermore, some students may underestimate the amount of work required in undertaking the programme while being in full-time employment and/or having family commitments. For part-time students applying to the programme,

a member of the programme team would normally meet with the applicants to go through the course requirements and to outline the level of effort required in order to be successful on the programme. Part-time study is difficult at the best of times but psychology may attract individuals who are interested in the course from a personal perspective rather than those seeking to attain an academic qualification that will advance their career. As described below, the Programme Team is currently considering strategies to minimise withdrawal rates.

### **3.3.2 Strategies for avoiding programme withdrawal**

A number of initiatives have been undertaken to target Psychology students who may be at risk of dropping out, particularly in their first year of study.

#### **3.3.2.1 Induction Programme**

The college runs an induction programme for all full-time students, which involves a number of different workshops and sessions relating to aspects of college life. At present, there is not a specific induction programme for psychology students, though this is something that may be considered as part of the programmatic review process. Another observation that the team has made during self-evaluation is that there is a much shorter induction programme for part-time programmes in NCI compared to those for full-time programmes. More attention paid at induction stage may be beneficial for the part-time psychology students.

#### **3.3.2.2 Getting to Grips Series**

The Student Support Services run a number of sessions throughout the academic year to support students across all aspects of student life. The sessions are run during daytimes and evenings to support both full- and part-time students. The sessions cover issues such as transitioning from second level to third level, and mindfulness and managing anxiety. A copy of the first semester *Getting to Grips* timetable is attached in the Appendix 4c.

#### **3.3.2.3 Attendance Monitoring**

The College has an attendance monitoring system in place for students. The purpose of this monitoring is to identify as early as possible those students who are at most risk of dropping out of their programme of study. Once a student has been identified as being at risk, the College intervenes by providing additional supports or counselling.

#### **3.3.2.4 Statistics Support Sessions**

The College has a dedicated Maths Support Tutor who works alongside the Psychology Programme Team to provide statistical support to students, particularly around examination time. The Advanced Statistics module is a case in point where the Maths Support Tutor would work with the lecturer concerned to provide a number of detailed pre-examination support sessions specifically for Psychology students.

### **3.3.3 Completion Rates**

Completion is defined as those students who have graduated from their intended programme within the envisaged timeframe. Percentage completion is calculated based on the number of students who graduated as a percentage of those who commenced the programme and are still registered. For part-time students, graduation is expected after 4 years. Since the part-time degree has been running for only 2 years, there are no part-time completion rates.

Caution is advised when reviewing the percentage completion rates as some are based on relatively small numbers thus creating the impression of greater non-completion. As both the full time and part-time psychology programmes are still in their infancy, full completion rates are only available for the first two intakes of students who commenced in the academic years 2012/2013 and 2013/2014.

**Table 11: Completion rates for 2012/2013 and 2013/2014 intakes**

| Course                           | Intake 2012/2013 |           |             | Intake 2013/2014 |           |             |
|----------------------------------|------------------|-----------|-------------|------------------|-----------|-------------|
|                                  | No<br>Commenced  | Graduated | % Graduated | No<br>Commenced  | Graduated | % Graduated |
| BA (Hons) Psychology – Full Time | 27               | 22*       | 81%         | 44               | 29        | 66%         |

### 3.3.3.1 2012-2013 cohort

The first cohort of psychology students who commenced in 2012/2013 had a completion rate of 81%. It should be noted that two students that were due to graduate in the expected 2014/2015 session did so in 2015/2016 (i.e. they graduated with the intake cohort of 2013/2014). However, these students are included in the 2012/2013 intake figures. This means that only five students did not graduate from the first cohort, thereby demonstrating a healthy completion rate. Closer analysis revealed that, of the students who failed to complete, one is still registered as a repeat student in year two of the programme, while another student has deferred. Of the remaining three students, two failed modules at second year, while the final student was absent from the second semester of third year. Taken together, the first cohort on the programme performed considerably well, especially given the low entry requirements at the time.

### 3.3.3.2 2013-2014 cohort

The 2013/2014 completion rate is not as high as that of the previous cohort. However, while this raw figure of 66% graduation rate seems quite low, it is important to note that this was influenced by a number of variables. First of all, this figure does not account for students who either withdrew or disengaged from the programme. For example, while two students formally withdrew (one in year two and another in year three), many others did not attend or complete assessments from early on in the programme and might therefore be assumed to have withdrawn. For example, in first year of the 2013/2014 cohort four students did not present any coursework or sit any examinations for the majority of their modules, while in second year, one student fell into this category. While this in itself is a concern, the lack of engagement from these students might imply that other external factors precluded them from completing the course requirements. If we excluded both formal and suspected withdrawals (i.e. 7 students in total) the completion rates of engaged students rises to 76%. Additionally, there are students in this group currently repeating failed modules and, therefore, are likely to graduate in subsequent years. Of those students who got through to third year (31), only 2 failed to graduate, meaning completion rates at this stage were 94%.

Notwithstanding this, the completion rates are something that the Programme Teams and Vice Dean for Undergraduate Studies keep under constant review. The completion rates are viewed as an indication of the quality of the programmes on offer and the rigorous adherence to high academic standards. The Programme Team continues to work on initiatives to support students to successfully achieve their goals however they must meet the academic standards and the professional body standards as set forth by PSI.

### 3.3.4 Academic Performance

#### 3.3.4.1 Pass and fail rates per stage

The table below displays the number and proportion of students progressing through each stage at the end of session. As can be seen, progression rates for all years are high ranging from 74% to 91%. To date only one part-time cohort has completed a year of study and these progression rates reflect the pattern of the full-time cohort. Figures are based on all students who were registered at the end of the given year. In other words, these figures do not include withdrawals.

**Table 12: Overall End of Session Results**

| Course                           | Stage | 2012/2013 |             | 2013/2014  |             | 2014/2015  |             | 2015/2016   |             |
|----------------------------------|-------|-----------|-------------|------------|-------------|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
|                                  |       | Fail      | Pass        | Fail       | Pass        | Fail       | Pass        | Fail        | Pass        |
| BA (Hons) Psychology – Full Time | 1     | 2<br>(7%) | 25<br>(93%) | 9<br>(20%) | 37<br>(80%) | 6<br>(15%) | 33<br>(85%) | 13<br>(20%) | 51<br>(80%) |
|                                  | 2     |           |             | 3<br>(12%) | 23<br>(88%) | 6<br>(16%) | 32<br>(84%) | 10<br>(26%) | 28<br>(74%) |
|                                  | 3     |           |             |            |             | 1<br>(5%)  | 20<br>(95%) | 2<br>(6%)   | 29<br>(94%) |
| BA(Hons) Psychology – Part Time  | 1     |           |             |            |             |            |             | 6<br>(26%)  | 17<br>(74%) |

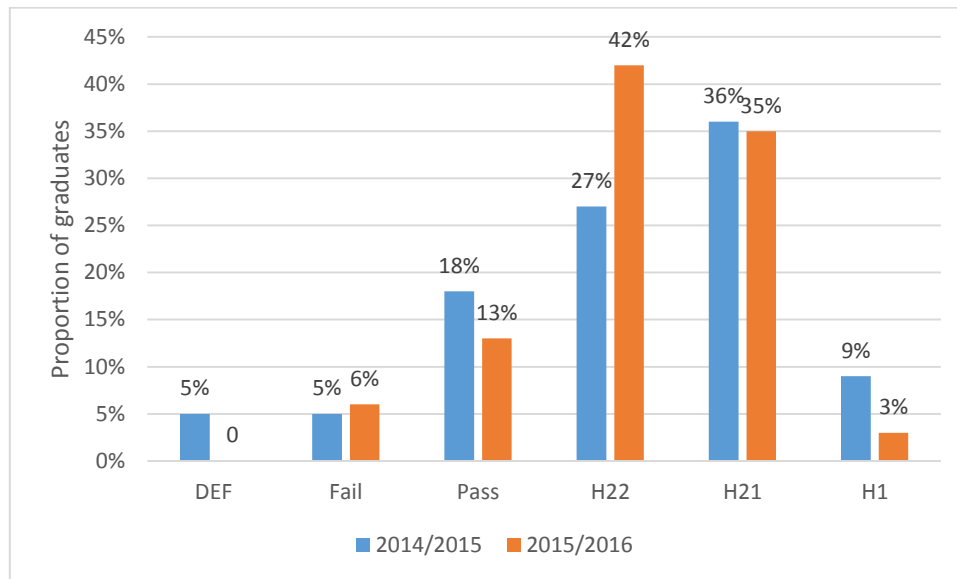
A closer analysis of those students who failed revealed that a common trend preventing progression was disengagement (i.e. failing to submit coursework or being absent for examinations). If such students were excluded, progression rates would increase further. Currently, one of the unique features of the psychology programmes compared to other Level 8 programmes in NCI is that students may not compensate via pass-by-compensation (i.e. compensate for a single failed module based on their results on other modules) in stage 2 and 3 of the programme. This lack of compensation strategy was a condition of our PSI accreditation (see letter outlining this in the Appendix). Analysis of previous results revealed that this had an impact on progression rates for a small number of (N = 6) students. While the number of students impacted is small, for the current programmatic review, the team have taken the decision to permit pass-by-compensation for stage 1 modules and will highlight this issue with PSI on our next accreditation in the academic year 2018/2019 with a view to enabling pass-by-compensation for stage two and three modules from this point forward.

### 3.3.5 Graduate award classification

Table 13 details the award classifications for the two cohorts that have graduated to date while Figure 2 details the percentage breakdown of both years. In total 49 students have graduated from the programme (20 in the academic year 2014/2015 and a further 29 in the year 2015/2016).

**Table 13: Grade Classification for two graduating cohorts to date–**

| Graduating class | Def    | Fail   | Pass    | H22      | H21      | H1     | Total N (%) |
|------------------|--------|--------|---------|----------|----------|--------|-------------|
| 2014/2015        | 1 (5%) | 1 (5%) | 4 (18%) | 6 (27%)  | 8 (36%)  | 2 (9%) | 22 (100%)   |
| 2015/2016        | -      | 2 (6%) | 4 (13%) | 13 (42%) | 11 (35%) | 1 (3%) | 31 (100%)   |



**Figure 2: Percentage of award classifications per the two graduating cohorts to date**

As can be seen, patterns of award classifications are broadly similar for both cohorts. Analysis reveals that the majority of students received either a 2.2 or a 2.1 award classification, with a smaller percentage achieving H1 or pass grades. This means that the majority of graduating learners were eligible to apply for graduate membership of the PSI, therefore being in a position to apply for further postgraduate training in psychology.

Of those students who were counted as having failed to graduate (only 3 in total over both years), all of these were not present for some of their assessments. This suggests that once students have progressed to the final stage of their degree, almost all successfully complete this stage.

### 3.3.6 Benchmarking against other HEA psychology programmes

An analysis of data from the HEA revealed the below breakdown of award classifications within psychology. It should be noted here that this data does not indicate the number of failures from other institutions, so percentage calculations are based on only those who successfully graduated. We have applied this same principle when comparing these award classifications to those of our 2015/2016 graduates.



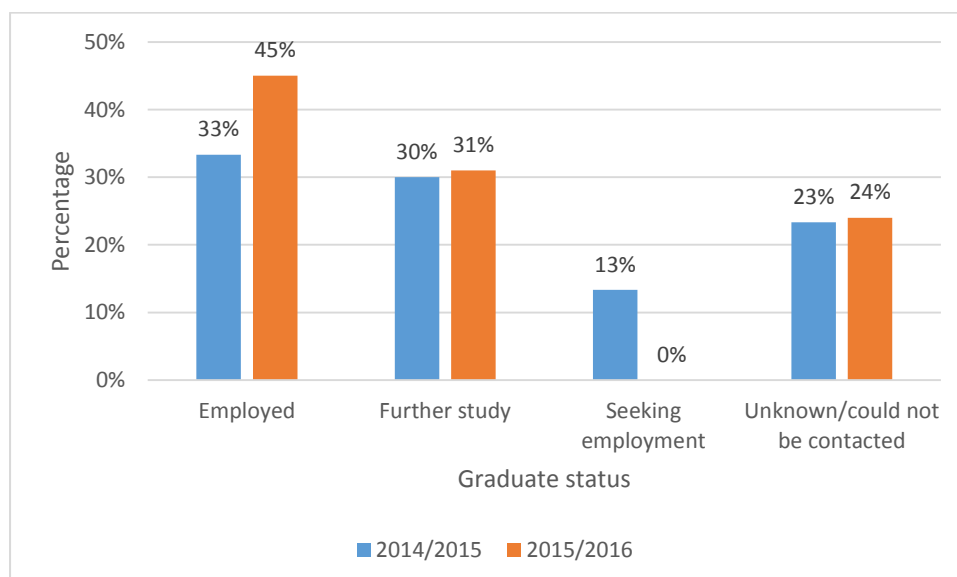
**Table 14: Comparison of awards with other HEA programmes in psychology**

|                          | H1  | H21 | H22 | Pass |
|--------------------------|-----|-----|-----|------|
| Institutes of technology | 24% | 40% | 29% | 6%   |
| Universities             | 26% | 63% | 10% | 0%   |
| NCI                      | 1%  | 38% | 29% | 19%  |

As can be seen, far fewer students received a first class honours or 2.1 award in comparison to other third level programmes. This could be attributed to the high level of CAO points required on entry to such courses. Typically, CAO points for psychology programmes are in excess of 500, whereas for the first two years of the programme, minimum CAO entry points were significantly lower than this (see earlier Table 4 for an analysis of CAO points). These statistics present evidence that the award standards are applied fairly and are comparable to those in other Level 8 programmes, some of which the NCI lecturing staff have also had experience of delivering.

### 3.4 Graduate destinations

As a matter of course, the careers office in NCI contact all graduates 6 months after graduation to ascertain their current employment or further study status. Of the total number of students to graduate from the programme to date (N = 49), 39 were successfully contacted. Of these students contacted, the majority were either in further study (N = 18) or in employment (N = 17). A smaller number (N = 4) reported that they were seeking employment. As can be seen from the figure below, the proportions were similar for each of the two graduating cohorts however none of the most recent graduates contacted reported that they were seeking employment.

**Figure 3: Percentage categorisation of 2014/2015 and 2015/2016 graduating cohorts**

#### 3.4.1 Destinations of 2014/2015 graduating cohort

Analysis from the career's office in NCI illustrated that the first cohort of students to graduate (in the year 2014/2015) were engaged in a variety of different further study options (n = 9) with others in employment (n = 4).

A more detailed analysis of the destinations of those graduates that responded to this survey is outlined in the table below. Please note that this does not include the students who could not be contacted at the time of this analysis (n = 6).

**Table 15: Graduate destinations for 2014/2015 graduating cohort**

| Status        | Details                                                                 |
|---------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Employed      | Assisi House, Retirement Home - Activities coordinator and Receptionist |
| Employed      | KidsNet Glynn, Youth Care Centre - Case Manager                         |
| Employed      | Linders Renault - Sales Executive                                       |
| Employed      | USA - Graduate Visa - Field Sales Specialist at OMI Industries          |
| Further study | City Colleges Dublin - Criminology & Criminal Psychology                |
| Further study | DCU - MSc in Business Management                                        |
| Further study | King's College London - MSc in Neuroscience                             |
| Further study | NCI – MAHRM                                                             |
| Further study | NCI – MAHRM                                                             |
| Further study | Queen's University - MSc in Animal Behaviour & Welfare                  |
| Further study | University of East London - MA in Counselling and Psychotherapy         |
| Further study | University of Ulster - PhD in Psychology                                |
| Further study | University of Ulster - PhD in Sports Psychology                         |

### 3.4.2 Destinations of 2015/2016 graduating cohort

Consistent with the trends of the previous cohort, analysis of the 2015/2015 cohort revealed that all those successfully contact (n = 22) were engaged in either employment (n = 13) or further study (n = 9). Again, this does not include those students who could not be contacted at the time (n = 7).

**Table 16: Graduate destinations for 2015/2016 graduating cohort**

| Status   | Details                                            |
|----------|----------------------------------------------------|
| Employed | AIB – Financial adviser                            |
| Employed | AIB - Bank Official                                |
| Employed | Cross Supervalu Newbridge – Deli Assistant         |
| Employed | Debenhams - Retail Sales Assistant                 |
| Employed | Ebay - Sales Executive                             |
| Employed | Focus Ireland - Residential Youth Worker           |
| Employed | Galvin's men's wear – Sales Assistant              |
| Employed | IDG (International Data Group) – Lead Generation   |
| Employed | Guinness Storehouse – Visitor Experience Assistant |
| Employed | Jonix Educational Services Preschool - Tutor       |
| Employed | Little Angels Playschool – Manager Assistant       |

|                      |                                                                |
|----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Employed</b>      | Parson's Shoes – Sales Assistant                               |
| <b>Employed</b>      | Retail (no further details provided)                           |
| <b>Further study</b> | DBS- MA in Addiction Studies                                   |
| <b>Further study</b> | Queen Margaret Univesrity – MSc in Speech and Language Therapy |
| <b>Further study</b> | MAHRM - NCI                                                    |
| <b>Further study</b> | Maynooth University - PhD                                      |
| <b>Further study</b> | MAHRM - NCI                                                    |
| <b>Further study</b> | MAHRM - NCI                                                    |
| <b>Further study</b> | Maastricht University – MSc Neuroscience                       |
| <b>Further study</b> | Maastricht University – MSc Neuroscience                       |

As can be seen from the above tables, not all graduates were working in fields directly related to psychology, and some indicated that they were seeking more relevant employment. However, our programme ensures that graduates are equipped with a range of transferable skills that enable them to pursue a number of different career directions (see Section 5.4.3 for an overview of these skills).

In addition, the fact that so many of our graduates have chosen to pursue further postgraduate study is testimony to the quality of our programme. Many of these Level 9 programmes are quite competitive and attractive to psychology graduates so it is testament to the quality of our programme that our graduates have been deemed suitable for entry onto such courses. It is noteworthy that a number of students from both graduated cohorts have progressed onto the MA in Human Resource Management (HRM) in NCI. This may be due to the lack of a current postgraduate programme in psychology in the college, but similarly this illustrates that our graduates are well-placed to enter into other fields of study beyond psychology. The programme hence can be seen to act as a potential platform for a range of postgraduate options.

It should of course also be acknowledged however that we only have had two cohorts to graduate from the programme to date and, given that numbers are small, it is too soon to infer any general patterns or trends from this data.

### 3.4.3 Careers support at NCI

In NCI there is extensive support for psychology students seeking out further postgraduate study and employment. For example, the Careers Office has produced a comprehensive information leaflet (see Appendix 8) which details potential destinations for psychology graduates. As outlined from the analysis here, only 20/25% of graduates go on to further study in psychology, so it would be expected that many of our students would branch into further areas of study and/or employment following their degree.

In addition, the Careers Office regularly run sessions on career development including one-to-one sessions, CV clinics and employer events. For example, also in the Appendix is a schedule of some of the events arranged by the careers office for the year 2016/2017. This also highlights the range of contacts and links that NCI has with industry. For example, in a recent Career's fair a wide range of employers were present with a view to recruiting NCI graduates. Psychology students were also invited to this event. In addition, a number of employers consulted in this forum indicated that they would be interested in employing psychology graduates, especially given the range of transferable skills that are developed.

#### **3.4.3.1 Future plans for career support in psychology**

Given that the psychology programme is relatively new in NCI, the programme team, in conjunction with the careers office, are looking for further ways in which best to support graduates in their future employment destinations. The careers office has noted that to date there has not been a lot of engagement from students on the psychology programme. However, there are a number of ways in which engagement may be improved. For example, currently it is common practice for the careers office to speak directly to the psychology students in the final stage of the programme but, based on student feedback, we now plan to move such sessions earlier to stage two of the programme, which is likely to be a more appropriate stage for students to reflect on their future career. This will also coincide with when students are making their elective choice which may further assist in their future career decisions.

As mentioned earlier in Section 2.5.5 students will be encouraged, where possible, to seek out volunteering opportunities and applied experience, in order to increase their potential employability. This will complement the set of transferable skills developed by students over the course of the programme as described later in Section 5.4.3. The value of these skills will be emphasised in communication with students and through their programme and module handbooks.

The programme team are also committed to promoting career events with students. The programme team are conscious of promoting the transferable skills graduates of the psychology programme exit with and will look for further opportunities to work with the career's team to promote these and possible career opportunities and directions to the student cohort.

#### **3.4.3.2 Development of an Alumni Association**

As previously highlighted, the Career's office in NCI currently follows up with all graduates six months after graduation however little is known about students' progression after this point. To address this, there are plans to more formally develop an Alumni Association for NCI in 2017. This will be coordinated by the Marketing Department. All graduates from the current academic year 2016/2017 will be included in the Alumni register and will be regularly contacted with a number of networking events planned. Such an initiative will likely increase engagement with graduates and therefore provide more information regarding their career paths.

Notwithstanding this, the College arranges a number of networking events for graduates through other fora.

### **3.5 External examiner reports**

The programme has had two external examiners since it commenced in 2012/2013.

- (1) Dr Lorraine Boran, Lecturer in Psychology, Dublin City University (2012-2014)
- (2) Dr Conor Mc Guckin, Lecturer in Educational Psychology, Trinity College Dublin (2015-present)

Both external examiners have been very complementary on the nature and content of the programme to date, and have largely been in agreement with the assessment strategy and marks awarded for particular modules. An overview of the external examiner annual reports can be seen in the Appendix 1a with a summary of the key points and actions below. The psychology team have reflected, and will continue to reflect upon this, feedback.

#### **3.5.1 Dr Lorraine Boran (2012-2014)**

As can be seen from the first annual report of 2012/2013, the external examiner Dr Lorraine Boran was very helpful in terms of our proposal to seek accreditation from PSI regarding the psychology programme. She noted that the programme contained modules that "fit with the core pillars of psychology" however she did informally suggest that greater focus be paid to the cognitive and biological pillars. The programme was subsequently modified, partially in light of this feedback, to

place more emphasis on this aspect (e.g. introduction of a new module in *Advanced Cognitive Psychology and Neuroscience* in 2015; see section 4.3).

In addition to reviewing the nature and content of the programme, the programme director at the time, Grace O'Malley, and current programme director, Dr Rebecca Maguire, were invited to view the psychology laboratory facilities in DCU, which had then recently received accreditation. This was a valuable opportunity to ascertain the required experimental facilities for a psychology programme and informed the development of the programme. In her 2013/2014 report, when the programme was formally accredited by PSI, Dr Boran noted that

*"...it is a credit to the team that the degree was formally accredited by the PSI for five years; so the degree has been deemed to meet the introductory and advanced requirements under the core pillars of psychology at level 8"*

In terms of feedback on marks and standards, Dr Boran was consistently in agreement that the appropriate standards had been applied. She did occasionally observe that there were a large number of pass grades, noting that *"one would expect a normal distribution of scores with a small percentage of firsts and fails"*. She suggested at the time that it might be necessary to review the admission criteria and supports for students to promote learning. However, it must be noted that the entry level for students onto this course in 2012/2013 and 2013/2014 were AQA and 210 which may explain the higher number of pass grades in comparison to other psychology providers which typically require high points for entry onto the programme. Her suggestion to examine the potential for more learning supports was however taken on board by the team. The college offers a range of supports (as detailed elsewhere in the document) for assisting students in their studies.

It should be noted that, at the time of the development of the first annual report, the team had intended launching a Higher Diploma in Psychology which is reflected in some of Dr Boran's comments. She noted that *"significant resources will be required to support and maintain standards for both programmes into the future"*. It was later decided not to run the HDip but the team made the decision to run the BA (Hons) programme on a part-time basis from 2015/2016.

One other concern to point out on the basis of the 2014/2015 report (semester 1) was that Dr Boran noted that some of the earlier comments she raised on the phrasing of particular exam questions were not addressed in the final version of the exam papers. It is important to emphasise that the psychology faculty take all comments and suggestions made by external examiners very seriously, however at times may not deem all suggestions to be necessary/appropriate. Based on the feedback received here, the team has now ensured that external examiners are to be replied to directly in such cases, so that a rationalisation for the retention of particular questions be provided.

Overall, Dr Boran commended the team on their experience, approachability and responsiveness to feedbacks and queries in her reports. She also noted that learning outcomes and methods of assessments were appropriate to support diverse forms of learning. Dr Boran also reported that engagement with the psychology faculty was very helpful. Specifically, she noted that:

*"the teaching team is incredibly experienced, approachable and responsive to queries and feedback; and this is reflected too in the diversity of topics, assessment modes and learning support activities in the programme"*

### **3.5.2 Dr Conor Mc Guckin (2015 – present)**

Dr Mc Guckin has been positive and complementary regarding the structure of the programme and its delivery since he commended as extern in May 2015. One extract of his most recent report states that...

*"A consistent and very positive aspect of the success of the programme is the support provided to the team by the team and subject leader. It was very encouraging to see the level of "hands-on" experiential work provided to the students. Although courses like this are often resource*

*intensive, it is evident from the assignments completed by the students that the resourcing level of the course is leading to positive professional learning opportunities. Indeed, it was also evident in my dealings with the lecturers from the course that all staff associated with the course are passionate about the modules and the student experience also."*

Dr Mc Guckin also complemented the good links made between theory and practice, as well as "appropriate discrimination within and across modules regarding student engagement and performance". He also commended the range of assessments taking place and encouraged the team "to continue to be innovative and creative with their approaches to assessment". He noted that there were often clear marking schemes in place with many excellent examples of feedback given to students however Dr Mc Guckin also emphasised that some work could be further considered in relation to "mapping the grade descriptors, continuing development of cross-marking and moderation, both within and across the modules". Recommendations here included mapping performance of each module and course level to ensure that performance was consistent. This process of cross-marking will continue to be reflected upon throughout the programmatic review.

Dr Mc Guckin did note that performance for a certain cohort of students was quite poor, even at repeat stage, however communication regarding strategies for dealing with such students was well received. He requested that a statistical / descriptive analysis of student performance on each module be provided to the external examiner which is something the team endeavours to do consistently in the future. Overall however Dr Mc Guckin was

*"satisfied with student performance on the programme. Assessment strategies and assignments were rigorous and allowed for discrimination between poor / good / advanced understanding."*

Beyond the assessment strategies, Dr Mc Guckin was also very complementary of the psychology lecturing team and their research endeavours. In his concluding section of the report he notes that:

*"I continue to be encouraged and enthused by this programme and the attempts made by the programme staff to deliver an effective and challenging educational (and personal) experience to the students in their care. The programme is appropriately challenging for the students, and would be rewarding for those students that engage with it in a mature manner. The programme team are competent and confident. There is great scope here for the staff to become even more confident in their competencies as lecturers and psychologists. I have noticed more publications emanating from the lecturers throughout this last year – this is very welcome and the students should be gaining in their confidence of these highly skilled lecturers. I had noted in my last report that this area of scholarly activity is of great importance to the integrity of the programme and the College. In terms of marketing, the ability to point to accomplished researchers / lecturers would increase the visibility of the programme. As noted last year, if the College values it's reputation in this area, I would encourage it to fully support the research endeavours of the programme staff. Great programmes are those where you can see fully the links between contemporary research that the staff are conducting and publishing, and the content of the lectures."*

## **3.6 Structure and workload of the programme**

### **3.6.1 Current structure of BA (Hons) Psychology Programme**

The structure of the currently validated programme is provided in Table 17 below along with an overview of the credit weightings, contact hours and total student effort hours required. Typically, full time learners engage in 15 hours of contact per week in stage 1, with approximately 12 hours per week in stage 2 and 10 hours per week in stage 3, although there are some variations in contact hours

per specific modules. This is broadly similar to the contact hours in other institutions where weekly contact time on psychology programmes typically range from 10-18 hours per week.

The stages are organised so that students are introduced to the core pillars of psychology over the first two stages, with more specialised and advanced topics focused on in the second half of stage 2 and stage 3. Alongside this, throughout the programme, students are progressively given more advanced and specialised training in research methodology and statistics, which then culminates in the execution of a final year project in stage 3.

**Table 17: Current structure of the BA (Hons) Psychology Programme**

| Name of Provider                                 |                                            |                 | National College of Ireland       |              |                 |                    |                      |               |                      |                     |                    |             |         |         |
|--------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------------|--------------|-----------------|--------------------|----------------------|---------------|----------------------|---------------------|--------------------|-------------|---------|---------|
| Programme Title (i.e. named award)               |                                            |                 | Bachelor of Arts(Hons) Psychology |              |                 |                    |                      |               |                      |                     |                    |             |         |         |
| Award Title (HETAC named award)                  |                                            |                 | Bachelor of Arts(Hons) Psychology |              |                 |                    |                      |               |                      |                     |                    |             |         |         |
| Stage Exit Award Title                           |                                            |                 |                                   |              |                 |                    |                      |               |                      |                     |                    |             |         |         |
| Modes of Delivery<br>(FT/PT/ACCS/BLENDED/OC etc) |                                            |                 | FT/ACCS                           |              |                 |                    |                      |               |                      |                     |                    |             |         |         |
| 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               | 5                  | 60                   |               | 01/09/15             |                     | 311                |             |         |         |
| Ref                                              | Module Title                               |                 | Semester                          | Module       |                 | ECTS Credit Number | Total Student Effort |               |                      | Allocation of Marks |                    |             |         |         |
|                                                  |                                            |                 |                                   | Status (M/E) | NFQ Level       |                    | Total Hours          | Contact Hours | Independent Learning | CA %                | Project %          | Practical % | Final % | Total % |
|                                                  | Applied Introduction and History of psych. |                 | 1                                 | M            | 6               | 10                 | 250                  | 60            | 190                  | 60                  |                    | 40          |         | 100     |
|                                                  | Introduction to Research Methods           |                 | 1                                 | M            | 6               | 10                 | 250                  | 60            | 190                  | 40                  |                    |             | 60      | 100     |
|                                                  | Social Psychology                          |                 | 1                                 | M            | 6               | 10                 | 250                  | 60            | 190                  | 40                  |                    |             | 60      | 100     |
|                                                  | Cognitive Psychology                       |                 | 2                                 | M            | 7               | 10                 | 250                  | 60            | 190                  | 10                  |                    | 30          | 60      | 100     |
|                                                  | Lifespan Development                       |                 | 2                                 | M            | 6               | 10                 | 250                  | 60            | 190                  | 20                  |                    | 20          | 60      | 100     |
|                                                  | Introduction to Statistics                 |                 | 2                                 | M            | 6               | 10                 | 250                  | 60            | 190                  |                     |                    | 40          | 60      | 100     |
| Special Regulations:                             |                                            |                 |                                   |              |                 |                    |                      |               |                      |                     |                    |             |         |         |



|                                               |                                               |                 |                                    |                 |                 |                     |                      |               |                      |                     |           |             |         |         |
|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------|------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------------|----------------------|---------------|----------------------|---------------------|-----------|-------------|---------|---------|
| Name of Provider                              |                                               |                 | National College of Ireland        |                 |                 |                     |                      |               |                      |                     |           |             |         |         |
| Programme Title (i.e. named award)            |                                               |                 | Bachelor of Arts (Hons) Psychology |                 |                 |                     |                      |               |                      |                     |           |             |         |         |
| Award Title (HETAC named award)               |                                               |                 | Bachelor of Arts (Hons) Psychology |                 |                 |                     |                      |               |                      |                     |           |             |         |         |
| Stage Exit Award Title                        |                                               |                 |                                    |                 |                 |                     |                      |               |                      |                     |           |             |         |         |
| Modes of Delivery (FT/PT/ACCS/BLENDED/OC etc) |                                               |                 | FT/ACCS                            |                 |                 |                     |                      |               |                      |                     |           |             |         |         |
| 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               | 6               | 60                  | 01/09/15             |               |                      | 311                 |           |             |         |         |
| Ref                                           | Module Title                                  |                 | Semester                           | Module          |                 | ECTS Credit Number  | Total Student Effort |               |                      | Allocation of Marks |           |             |         |         |
|                                               |                                               |                 |                                    | Status (M/E)    | NFQ Level       |                     | Total Hours          | Contact Hours | Independent Learning | CA %                | Project % | Practical % | Final % | Total % |
|                                               | Personality & Individual Differences          |                 | 1                                  | M               | 7               | 10                  | 250                  | 48            | 202                  | 20                  |           | 20          | 60      | 100     |
|                                               | Biological Basis of Behaviour                 |                 | 1                                  | M               | 7               | 10                  | 250                  | 48            | 202                  | 20                  |           | 20          | 60      | 100     |
|                                               | Applied Statistics                            |                 | 1                                  | M               | 7               | 10                  | 250                  | 48            | 202                  | 40                  |           |             | 60      | 100     |
|                                               | Coaching Psychology                           |                 | 2                                  | M               | 7               | 10                  | 250                  | 48            | 202                  | 100                 |           |             |         | 100     |
|                                               | Psychology of Learning and Behaviour Analysis |                 | 2                                  | M               | 8               | 10                  | 250                  | 48            | 202                  | 40                  |           |             | 60      | 100     |
|                                               | Applied Research Methods                      |                 | 2                                  | M               | 7               | 5                   | 125                  | 24            | 101                  |                     | 40        |             | 60      | 100     |
|                                               | Psychology Labs                               |                 | 2                                  | M               | 7               | 5                   | 125                  | 24            | 101                  |                     |           | 100         |         | 100     |

| Name of Provider                                 |                                                |                    | National College of Ireland        |                    |                       |                          |                      |                  |                         |                     |              |                |            |            |
|--------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|--------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|--------------|----------------|------------|------------|
| Programme Title (i.e. named award)               |                                                |                    | Bachelor of Arts (Hons) Psychology |                    |                       |                          |                      |                  |                         |                     |              |                |            |            |
| Award Title (HETAC named award)                  |                                                |                    | Bachelor of Arts (Hons) Psychology |                    |                       |                          |                      |                  |                         |                     |              |                |            |            |
| Stage Exit Award Title                           |                                                |                    |                                    |                    |                       |                          |                      |                  |                         |                     |              |                |            |            |
| Modes of Delivery<br>(FT/PT/ACCS/BLENDED/OC etc) |                                                |                    | FT/ACCS                            |                    |                       |                          |                      |                  |                         |                     |              |                |            |            |
| Award Class                                      | Award<br>NFQ Level                             | Award<br>EQF Level | Stage                              | Stage NFQ<br>Level | Stage<br>EQF<br>Level | Stage Credit<br>(ECTS)   | Date Effective       |                  | ISCED Subject Code      |                     |              |                |            |            |
| MAJOR                                            | 8                                              | 6                  | AWARD                              | 8                  | 6                     | 60                       | 01/09/15             |                  | 311                     |                     |              |                |            |            |
|                                                  | Module Title                                   |                    | Semester                           | Module             |                       | ECTS<br>Credit<br>Number | Total Student Effort |                  |                         | Allocation of Marks |              |                |            |            |
|                                                  |                                                |                    |                                    | Status<br>(M/E)    | NFQ<br>Level          |                          | Total<br>Hours       | Contact<br>Hours | Independent<br>Learning | CA<br>%             | Project<br>% | Practical<br>% | Final<br>% | Total<br>% |
|                                                  | Advanced Developmental Psychology              |                    | 1                                  | M                  | 8                     | 10                       | 250                  | 48               | 202                     | 100                 |              |                |            | 100        |
|                                                  | Advanced cognitive psychology and neuroscience |                    | 1                                  | M                  | 8                     | 5                        | 125                  | 24               | 101                     | 40                  |              |                | 60         | 100        |
|                                                  | Criminal psychology                            |                    | 1                                  | M                  | 8                     | 5                        | 125                  | 24               | 101                     | 40                  |              |                | 60         | 100        |
|                                                  | Abnormal Psychology                            |                    | 2                                  | M                  | 8                     | 10                       | 250                  | 48               | 202                     | 40                  |              |                | 60         | 100        |
|                                                  | Cyberpsychology                                |                    | 2                                  | M                  | 8                     | 5                        | 125                  | 24               | 101                     | 40                  |              |                | 60         |            |
|                                                  | Workplace Psychology                           |                    | 2                                  | M                  | 8                     | 5                        | 125                  | 24               | 101                     |                     | 40           |                | 60         | 100        |
|                                                  | Final Project                                  |                    | 1&2                                | M                  | 8                     | 20                       | 500                  | 40               | 260                     |                     | 100          |                |            | 100        |

### 3.6.2 Timetabling and sequencing of modules

In terms of timetabling, classes on the full-time programme are timetabled to take place any time between Monday-Friday 9-5pm. This is managed by a central timetabling system. Any modules requiring access to laboratory or experimental equipment are timetabled in the required computer or experimental laboratories. An indicative schedule of the various learning units for each module is detailed below.

**Table 18: Timetabling for full-time programme**

| Stage | Semester 1                                                        |                                                            | Semester 2                                         |                                                           |
|-------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
|       | Module (credits)                                                  | Teaching and learning units                                | Module (credits)                                   | Teaching and learning units                               |
| 1     | Applied introduction and history of psychology (10)               | Lecture 1 (2 hrs)<br>Lecture 2 (2 hrs)<br>Tutorial (1 hr)  | Cognitive psychology (10)                          | Lecture 1 (2 hrs)<br>Lecture 2 (2 hrs)<br>Tutorial (1 hr) |
|       | Introduction to Research Methods (10)                             | Lecture 1 (2 hrs)<br>Lecture 2 (1 hr)<br>Practical (2 hrs) | Lifespan development (10)                          | Lecture 1 (2 hrs)<br>Lecture 2 (2 hrs)<br>Tutorial (1 hr) |
|       | Social psychology (10)                                            | Lecture 1 (2 hrs)<br>Lecture 2 (2 hrs)<br>Tutorial (1 hr)  | Introduction to statistics (10)                    | Lecture 1 (2 hrs)<br>Practical (2 hrs)<br>Tutorial (1 hr) |
|       |                                                                   |                                                            |                                                    |                                                           |
| 2     | Personality and individual differences (10)                       | Lecture 1 (2 hrs)<br>Lecture 2 (1 hr)<br>Tutorial (1 hr)   | Psychology of learning and behaviour analysis (10) | Lecture 1 (2 hrs)<br>Lecture 2 (1 hr)<br>Tutorial (1 hr)  |
|       | Biological basis of behaviour (10)                                | Lecture 1 (2 hrs)<br>Lecture 2 (1 hr)<br>Tutorial (1 hr)   | Coaching psychology (10)                           | Lecture (2 hrs)<br>Practical (2 hrs)                      |
|       | Applied statistics (10)                                           | Lecture (2 hrs)<br>Practical (2 hrs)                       | Applied research methods (5)                       | Practical (2 hrs)                                         |
|       |                                                                   |                                                            | Psychology labs (5)                                | Practical (2 hrs)                                         |
| 3     | Final project (20) – run across both semesters in weekly seminars |                                                            |                                                    |                                                           |
|       | Advanced developmental psychology (10)                            | Lecture (2 hrs)<br>Practical (2 hrs)                       | Abnormal psychology (10)                           | Lecture (2 hrs)<br>Practical (2 hrs)                      |
|       | Advanced cognitive psychology and neuroscience                    | Lecture (2 hrs)                                            | Cyber psychology (5)                               | Lecture (2 hrs)                                           |
|       | Criminal psychology (5)                                           | Lecture (2 hrs)                                            | Workplace psychology (5)                           | Lecture (2 hrs)                                           |

There are slightly higher contact hours for modules in stage one of the full-time programme given that students at this stage may need more support upon entering third level. This decision was taken in

order to minimise dropout rates and withdrawal from the system and to ease students' transition into higher education.

In contrast to the full-time programme, in which classes can be spread over four or five days per week, the part-time programme is currently scheduled for two evenings a week from 6-10pm. Students take the first two stages over three years with stage 3 taken over their fourth year. At this final stage, students will also attend Saturday lectures on a monthly basis in addition to two evenings per week. These classes will centre on preparation and support for the students' final year dissertation.

In line with the full-time programme, each 10 credit module typically entails four hours of contact time per week with 5 credit modules having two hours of contact time per week. Teaching and learning strategies within this time entail a mixture of lecture, tutorial and practical-based activities. Students are also set a number of directed learning tasks to ensure that they cover the same amount of material as the full-time students. A more detailed overview of this schedule is shown in Table 19.

Currently both cohorts of part-time students have their classes scheduled on two concurrent evenings (Tuesday and Wednesday) however feedback from some students has suggested that this intensive approach, while working well for some, may be tiring for others. Given that there have been a number of withdrawals from the programme to date, a potential way of minimising burden would be to timetable the two evenings on two alternative nights (e.g. Monday and Wednesday, or Tuesday and Thursday). This will be a consideration for future intakes into the programme.

**Table 19: Timetabling for part-time programme**

| Stage    | Year | Semester 1                                                       | Semester 2                                          |
|----------|------|------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| <b>1</b> | 1    | <b>Module (credits) and weekly hrs</b>                           | <b>Module (credits) and weekly hrs</b>              |
|          |      | Applied introduction and history of psychology (10) – 4 hrs      | Social psychology (10) – 4 hrs                      |
|          |      | Introduction to Research Methods (10) – 4 hrs                    | Lifespan development (10) – 4 hrs                   |
|          | 2    | Cognitive psychology (10) – 4 hrs                                | Biological basis of behaviour (10)                  |
| <b>2</b> | 3    | Introduction to statistics (10) – 4 hrs                          | Personality and individual differences (10) – 4 hrs |
|          |      | Psychology of learning and behaviour analysis (10) – 4 hrs       | Coaching psychology (10) – 4 hrs                    |
|          |      | Applied statistics (10) – 4 hrs                                  | Applied research methods (5) – 2 hrs                |
|          | 4    | -                                                                | Psychology labs (5) – 2 hrs                         |
| <b>3</b> | 4    | Final Project (20) – 3 day long Saturday workshops each semester |                                                     |
|          |      | Advanced developmental psychology (10) – 4 hrs                   | Abnormal psychology (10) – 4 hrs                    |
|          |      | Advanced cognitive psychology and neuroscience (5) – 2 hrs       | Cyber psychology (5) – 2 hrs                        |
|          |      | Criminal psychology (5) – 2 hrs                                  | Workplace psychology (5) – 2 hrs                    |

### 3.6.3 Learner-to-teacher ratios

Learner-to-teacher ratios vary with the particular type of activity. For example, lectures are delivered in ratios up to 1:90 at present, however tutorial and practical sessions are delivered with a ratio of approximately 1:30. Project supervision in stage 3 is done on a 1:1 basis with each member of staff however as numbers grow it is likely that the programme team will have to revisit other options in terms of delivering supervision. Possibilities include, but are not limited to, group supervision whereby students are allocated to small groups based on methodological approach or similarity of topic and work to support each other under the guidance of a supervisor. The specific learning units can be seen in Table 19 above.

### 3.6.4 Attendance data

Generally attendance for students on the programme is good, with higher attendance reported for those on the part-time, as opposed to the full-time cohort. This is reflective of trends on other programme in NCI. The College expects all its student population to engage with and attend all learning activities and events associated with their course of study in the National College of Ireland. Student Engagement and Attendance Monitoring (SEAM) is the process whereby the college monitors the attendance and engagement of their student population for the purpose of early identification of at risk or habitual non-attenders.

The College recognises the value of engagement monitoring to help identify students who may be in danger of leaving their course of study. Through early identification of such students, the College has the opportunity to proactively offer assistance and guidance to encourage progression and to avoid potential discontinuation. SEAM is also essential for the College to meet its statutory requirements for receipt of funding and its legal obligations with the Garda National Immigration Bureau for our International student cohort.

## 3.7 Assessment

### 3.7.1 Assessment policies and procedures

The BA (Hons) Psychology programme adheres to NCI's policies and procedures on assessment which are outlined in the appendix. This document provides detail on marking of assessments, guidelines on correcting, reasonable accommodation for exams and timeline for the return of examination scripts.

#### Marking of assessment

In order to ensure consistent marking, a 10% sample of assessments are second marked. In the case of psychology dissertations, blind double marking applies. The following guidelines apply for the marking of assessment:

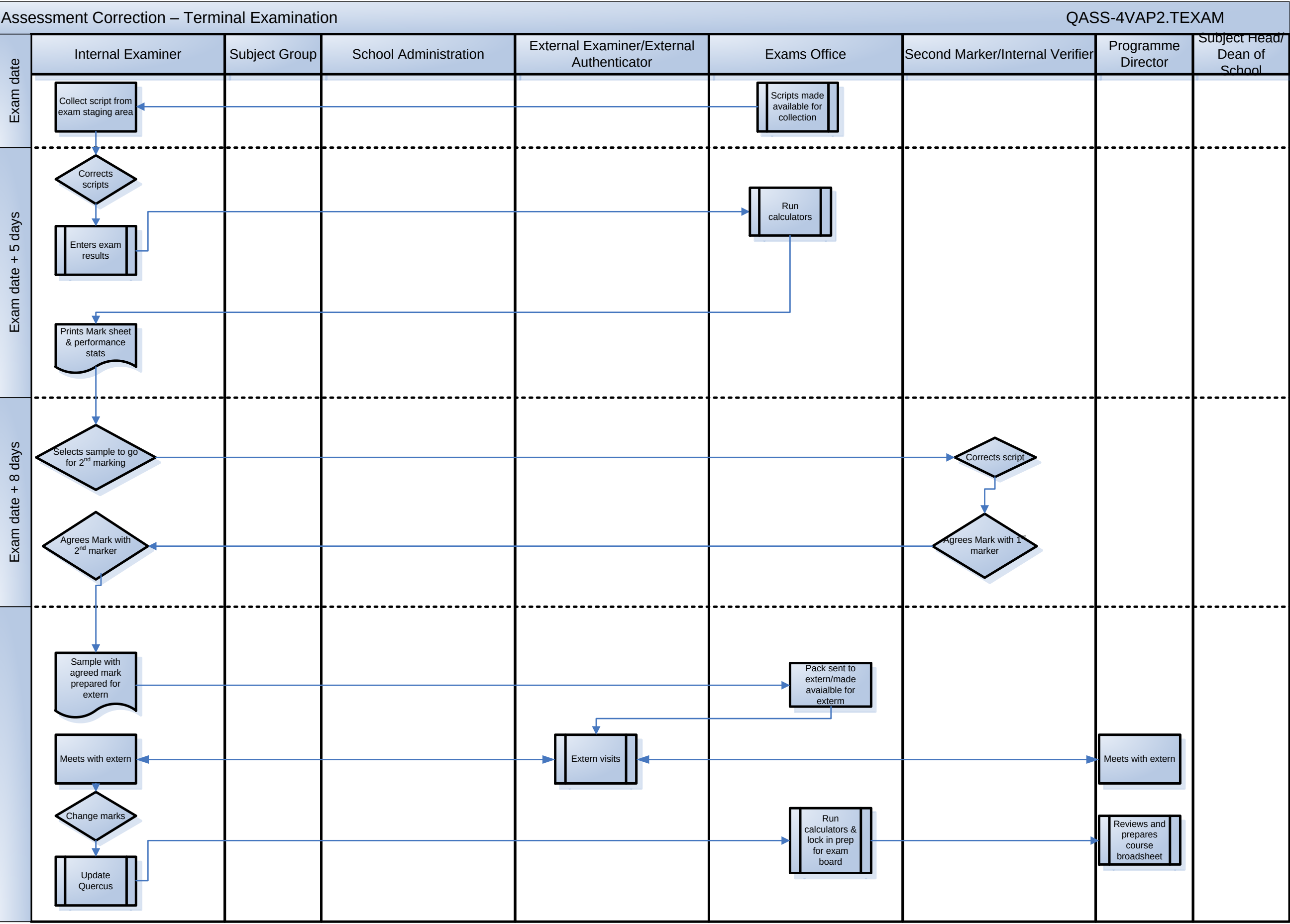
- 1st and 2nd markers should be paired at the commencement of the semester and no later than week 3. This pairing takes place at School level.
- Where blind double marking is required, it is recommended that 2 copies of the assessment are submitted by the learner for that purpose. It is unlikely that a single examination script will be subject to blind double marking. As each is marked separately, there is no requirement to erase marks, comments etc.
- Where seen double marking is used, it is recommended that a different colour pen to the learner and 1st marker is used.
- Markers must ensure that they keep an accurate record of the marks being awarded to the sample by using the Double Marking Audit Sheet provided.

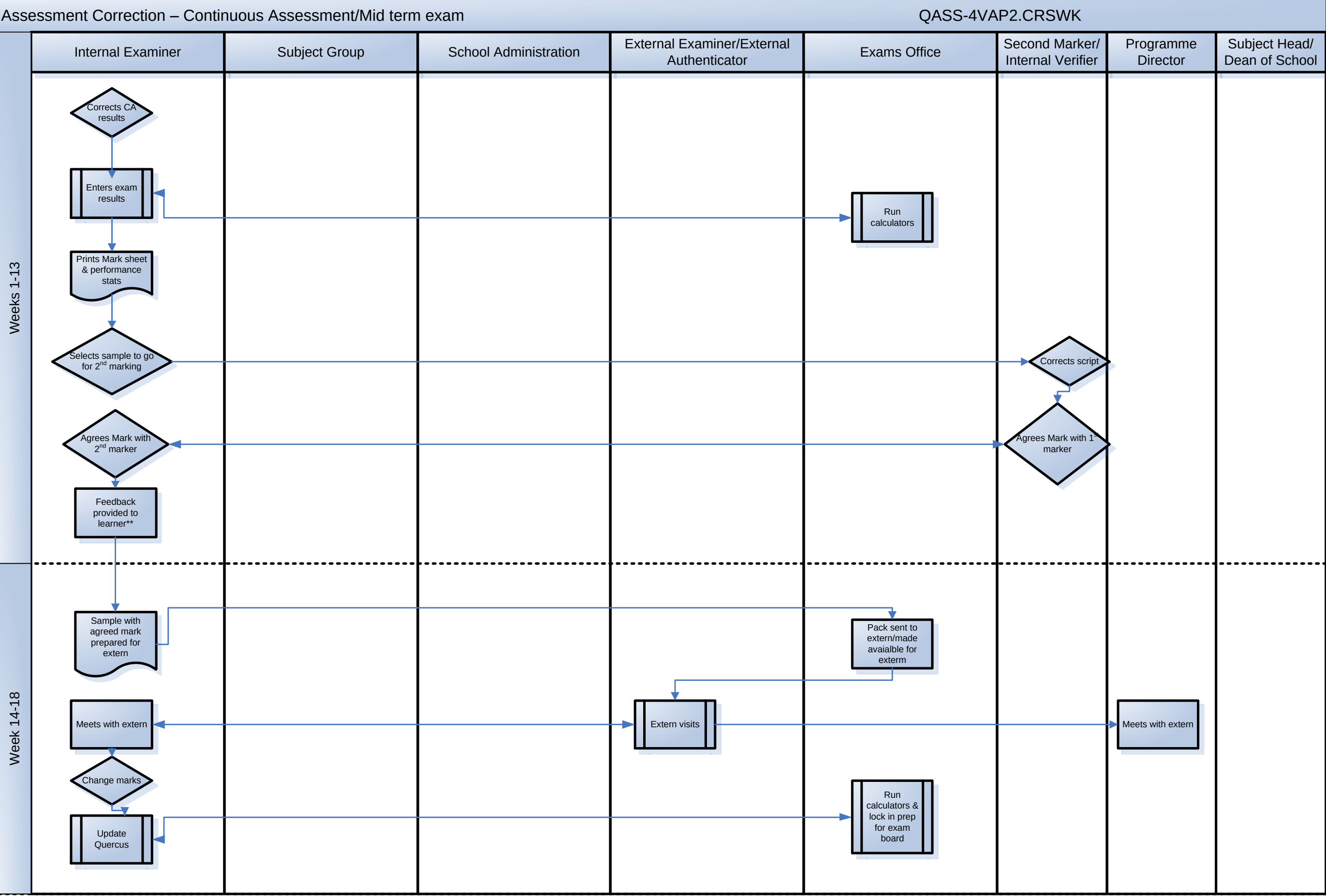
- The sample must be passed from the 1st marker to the 2nd marker as soon as it becomes available.
- The 2nd marker must note their marks on the Double Marking Audit Sheet.
- A discussion must take place between the 1st and 2nd markers in terms of agreeing the marks for the sample. If there is no material difference between the 1st and 2nd marker, the mark of the 1st marker should remain as the agreed mark. Any discussion should be regarding grade bands and not individual marks.
- The agreed marks may now be noted on the sample scripts.
- 1st and 2nd markers are required to sign both the Double Marking Audit Sheet and the marksheet attachment before submitting the scripts to the Examinations Office for external examining.

#### **Submission and verification of subject marks**

- Final agreed assessment marks should be entered by the Internal Examiner to the College MIS system (QuercusPlus) within 2 weeks of correction and, in the case of terminal examinations, at least two weeks in advance of the appropriate meetings for the examinations board. Normally, a "Mark Sheet" should be completed in respect of each Examination Subject, and signed by both Internal examiner, Second Marker and External Examiners.
- The External Examiner(s) should certify the agreed final marks for each candidate on the "Mark Sheet". The completed "Mark Sheet" should include the following for each candidate
- The allocation of marks for Written, Oral, Practical, Projects, Continuous Assessment etc., in accordance with the terms of the Approved Programme Schedule currently in operation
- The overall total of marks awarded to each candidate and agreed upon by the Internal and External Examiners for that Examination Subject.

Diagrams indicating the timelines of correction of exams and assessment are given below. This highlights the role of the internal examiner, second maker, external examiner, and the exams office.







### 3.7.2 Current assessment methods and strategy

In the programme students are exposed to a wide range of assessment strategies, consisting of traditional essay-based assessments and terminal examinations, as well as more innovative assessments including practical participation, the use of clicker technology, and a number of applied projects. Table 20 below gives an overview of the current assessment employed in the programme for the most recent academic year (2016/2017) while the following Table 21 gives a broader overview of how these assessments are spread across the various stages and semesters. Though not included in the table here, a wide range of formative assessment strategies are also employed in addition to these summative assessments. Formative assessments include class exercises and activities, discussions, feedback on work-in-progress and MCQ questions. More detail on examples of formative assessments are given in the individual module descriptors in the validation document while the Appendix includes a range of past assessment, exam papers, and rubrics.

As can be seen from the below tables, most modules entail a terminal examination ranging from 2-2.5 hours. Typically, examinations require students to undertake three questions from a possible five. There are also five 100% CA modules (*Applied Introduction to Psychology*, *Coaching Psychology*, *Psychology Labs*, *Advanced Developmental Psychology* and the *Final Project*) although all modules involve some continuous assessment component.

**Table 20: Current assessment strategy 2016/2017**

#### Stage 1 Semester 1

| Module (credits)                                           | Assessment                     | Details (e.g. word count)                                                                                                                    | Due (approx.)   | % Marks |
|------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|---------|
| <b>Applied introduction and history of psychology (10)</b> | Essay                          | Essay on history of psychology (1,000-1,200 words)                                                                                           | week 4          | 20      |
|                                                            | Essay                          | Essay on a topic in biopsychology (1,200)                                                                                                    | week 6          | 20      |
|                                                            | Essay                          | Essay on sensation and perception (1,200)                                                                                                    | week 8          | 20      |
|                                                            | Lab report                     | Report based on fieldwork conducted in cognitive psychology (1,000 words)                                                                    | week 10         | 20      |
|                                                            | Group presentation             | Presentation based on groupwork within health psychology                                                                                     | week 12         | 20      |
| <b>Introduction to research methods (10)</b>               | MCQ                            | MCQ based on material covered to date (30 questions)                                                                                         | week 5          | 5       |
|                                                            | Literature review and proposal | Literature review and research proposal for a specified topic (approx. 2,000 words)                                                          | week 9          | 35      |
|                                                            | Terminal examination           | 3 questions from 5; 2 hours duration                                                                                                         | End of semester | 60      |
| <b>Social psychology (10)</b>                              | MCQ                            | MCQ based on material covered to date                                                                                                        | Week 6          | 10      |
|                                                            | Essay                          | Essay involving critically thinking about how social psychology can be used to change or modify behaviour within society (1,000-1,200 words) | Week 11         | 30      |

|  |                      |                                      |                 |    |
|--|----------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------|----|
|  | Terminal examination | 3 questions from 5; 2 hours duration | End of semester | 60 |
|--|----------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------|----|

### Stage 1 Semester 2

| Module (credits)                       | Assessment            | Details (e.g. word count)                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Due             | Marks |
|----------------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-------|
| <b>Lifespan development (10)</b>       | MCQ                   | MCQ based on material covered to date                                                                                                                                                                                                  | week 7          | 20    |
|                                        | Practical report      | Students are required to watch a video of a child interacting with their environment and write a 1200 word child observation report based on Piaget's theory of Cognitive Development                                                  | week 11         | 20    |
|                                        | Terminal examination  | 3 questions from 5; 2.5 hours duration                                                                                                                                                                                                 | End of semester | 60    |
| <b>Introduction to statistics (10)</b> | MCQ                   | Students complete a multiple choice question (MCQ) tests based on material covered in weeks 2, 3, and 4. 40 Questions to be completed in 50 minutes.                                                                                   | week 5          | 10    |
|                                        | Practical exam        | Students are presented with an unseen SPSS data set and required to work through a set of tasks that examine their understanding of statistical concepts and their ability to use SPSS. Students have 50 minutes to complete the exam. | week 12         | 30    |
|                                        | Terminal examination  | 3 questions from 5; 2.5 hours duration                                                                                                                                                                                                 | End of semester | 60    |
| <b>Cognitive psychology (10)</b>       | Ongoing participation | Students use mobile or clicker technology on an ongoing basis to answer questions relevant to course content                                                                                                                           | Ongoing         | 10    |
|                                        | Lab report            | Students conduct an experiment and write up a report on this (approx. 2,000 words)                                                                                                                                                     | Week 10         | 30    |
|                                        | Terminal Examination  | 3 questions from 5; 2.5 hours duration                                                                                                                                                                                                 | End of semester | 60    |

### Stage 2 Semester 1

| Module (credits)                          | Assessment | Details (e.g. word count)             | Due    | Marks |
|-------------------------------------------|------------|---------------------------------------|--------|-------|
| <b>Biological basis of behaviour (10)</b> | MCQ        | MCQ based on material covered to date | week 3 | 5     |

|                                                      |                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                 |    |
|------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|----|
|                                                      | Essay                               | Students complete an essay on a topic within sensation and perception (1,500 words)                                                                                                                                | week 7/8        | 15 |
|                                                      | Lab report                          | Students write a group lab report describing research they conducted using physiological measurements (2,000-2,500 words)                                                                                          | week 12         | 20 |
|                                                      | Terminal examination                | 3 questions from 5; 2.5 hours duration                                                                                                                                                                             | End of semester | 60 |
| <b>Applied statistics (10)</b>                       | Analysis and interpretation of data | Required to determine the appropriate statistical tests to use to address research questions posed from a mock journal article. Students then required to complete the Results and Discussion sections of article. | week 10         | 40 |
|                                                      | Terminal examination                | 3 questions from 5; 2.5 hours duration                                                                                                                                                                             | End of semester | 60 |
| <b>Personality and individual differences e (10)</b> | Essay                               | 1,500 word obituary on a personality theorist                                                                                                                                                                      | Week 6          | 20 |
|                                                      | Report                              | 1,000 word report on intelligence testing                                                                                                                                                                          | Week 12         | 20 |
|                                                      | Terminal examination                | 3 questions from 5; 2.5 hours duration                                                                                                                                                                             | End of semester | 60 |

#### Stage 2 Semester 2

| Module (credits)                | Assessment         | Details (e.g. word count)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Due     | Marks |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|-------|
| <b>Coaching psychology (10)</b> | Group case study   | Design and submit a case-study which highlights a performance issue for an individual. This issue can be based in a sports, educational, personal or organisational context (700 words)                                                                                          | week 4  | 30    |
|                                 | Group report       | Students submit a group report on the performance plan generated by the team which is based on case and solution. This plan also needs to explain evaluation of approach to generating a plan, devising a solution and how you would evaluate actual performance. (2,000 words). | week 11 | 20    |
|                                 | Group Presentation | Students present in groups on the case and solution generated; linking into relevant theories and research. All members need to participate and evidence of the presentation needs to be generated (10-15 minutes). This is graded individually                                  | week 12 | 20    |

|                                                           |                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                     |    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----|
|                                                           | Reflective blog      | This will record weekly reflections on learning in class. This blog is not a description of class content, it should chart or record changes in students' learning, understanding and thinking of psychology (no word limit although word count of 2000 is provided as guideline). | ongoing                             | 40 |
| <b>Psychology of Learning and Behaviour Analysis (10)</b> | Practical lab report | Required to write up a lab report on the Sniffy the Rat Experiments completed in class (1,500 words)                                                                                                                                                                               | Lab in week 5, Report due in week 7 | 20 |
|                                                           | Learning leaflet     | Required to create a short leaflet targeted at new third level students entitled "How to learn at college". (< 1,000 words)                                                                                                                                                        | Week 10                             | 20 |
|                                                           | Terminal examination | 3 questions from 5; 2.5 hours duration                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | End of semester                     | 60 |
| <b>Applied research methods (5)</b>                       | Research proposal    | Students develop a research proposal that is suitable to a final year thesis project.                                                                                                                                                                                              | Week 10                             | 30 |
|                                                           | Presentation         | Students present their research in a 5 minute presentation.                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Week 11/12                          | 10 |
|                                                           | Terminal examination | 3 questions from 5; 2.5 hours duration                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | End of semester                     | 60 |
| <b>Psychology labs (5)</b>                                | Minor lab report 1   | Students are required to write a short lab report on the research question addressed in class that week (1,000 – 1,500 words)                                                                                                                                                      | Week 3                              | 15 |
|                                                           | Minor lab report 2   | See CA1                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Week 5                              | 15 |
|                                                           | Minor lab report 3   | See CA1                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Week 7                              | 15 |
|                                                           | Minor lab report 4   | See CA1                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Week 9                              | 15 |
|                                                           | Major lab report     | Students are required to write a comprehensive lab report on the research question addressed in class (c. 3,500 words)                                                                                                                                                             | Week 12                             | 40 |

### Stage 3 Semester 1

| Module (credits)                 | Assessment | Details (e.g. word count)                                                                                     | Due    | Marks |
|----------------------------------|------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|-------|
| <b>Final project Part 1 (20)</b> | Proposal   | Students must develop a research proposal, which includes a short literature review, proposed methodology and | Week 5 | 10    |

|                                                            |                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                 |    |
|------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|----|
|                                                            |                            | analysis, as well as an indication of how the research adheres to ethical guidelines.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                 |    |
| <b>Advanced developmental psychology (10) - Semester 1</b> | Report                     | Students will be required to examine research questions using the GUI data in the lab and to write a brief summary of the findings and how they fit with the literature                                                                                                                                                                              | Week 7          | 10 |
|                                                            | Essay                      | Students will be required to write an essay in a topic of Applied Developmental Psychology, demonstrating the link between theory, research and practice in the area.                                                                                                                                                                                | Week 9          | 30 |
|                                                            | Practical and presentation | Students will be required to write a detailed report on work with Home Visitors from the Early Learning Initiative evaluating numeracy in the early years (1,500-2,000 words) (30%). They will also be required to complete an in-class presentation on this report, integrating their observations with other contemporary research findings (30%). | Week 12         | 60 |
| <b>Advanced cognitive psychology and Neuroscience (5)</b>  | Class participation        | Students will be posed questions on an ongoing basis relating to course content using clicker technology                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Ongoing         | 5  |
|                                                            | Poster presentation        | Students are required to design and present a poster examining a specialist aspect of cognition                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Week 11         | 35 |
|                                                            | Written examination        | 3 questions from 5; 2.5 hours duration                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | End of semester | 60 |
| <b>Criminal psychology (5)</b>                             | Essay                      | Students will write a critical essay on the role of developmental factors in the prediction/protection of criminal behaviour (2,000 words)                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Week 10         | 40 |
|                                                            | Terminal examination       | 3 questions from 5; 2.5 hours duration                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | End of semester | 60 |

### Stage 3 – semester 2

| Module (credits)                 | Assessment   | Details (e.g. word count)                                                                | Due     | Marks |
|----------------------------------|--------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|-------|
| <b>Final project Part 2 (20)</b> | Dissertation | 8,000-10,000 word dissertation which details the study conducted                         | Week 10 | 80    |
|                                  | Presentation | Students are required to give a 10 minute conference-style presentation on their project | Week 11 | 20    |
|                                  | Essay        | Students will write a critical essay on a chosen topic from the field of abnormal        | Week 6  | 40    |

|                                 |                      |                                                                                                                                                                      |                 |    |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|----|
| <b>Abnormal psychology (10)</b> |                      | psychology. They will be required to approach their chosen topic from multiple theoretical approaches and evaluate contemporary evidence in this area (2,000 words). |                 |    |
|                                 | Terminal examination | 3 questions from 5; 2.5 hours duration                                                                                                                               | End of semester | 60 |
| <b>Cyberpsychology (5)</b>      | Research proposal    | Students will submit an original research proposal in cyberpsychology with an accompanying literature review (2,000 words)                                           | Week 12         | 40 |
|                                 | Terminal examination | 3 questions from 5; 2.5 hours duration                                                                                                                               | End of semester | 60 |
| <b>Workplace psychology (5)</b> | Essay                | Essay relating to organisational behaviour (2,000 words)                                                                                                             | Week 7          | 40 |
|                                 | Terminal examination | 3 questions from 5; 2.5 hours duration                                                                                                                               | End of semester | 60 |

Table 21: Current assessment schedule 2016/2017

| Stage 1 Semester 1                     |   |                                                                        |                  |                  |                  |             |                  |                  |             |                         |                         |                        |                                              |                     |
|----------------------------------------|---|------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------|------------------|------------------|-------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Week                                   | 1 | 2                                                                      | 3                | 4                | 5                | 6           | Reading week     | 7                | 8           | 9                       | 10                      | 11                     | 12                                           | Semester end        |
| Applied intro & history of psych       |   |                                                                        |                  | Essay (20%)      |                  | Essay (20%) |                  |                  | Essay (20%) |                         | Lab report (20%)        |                        | Presentati on (20%)                          | -                   |
| Introduction to research methods       |   |                                                                        |                  |                  | MCQ (5%)         |             |                  |                  |             | Review & proposal (35%) |                         |                        |                                              | Terminal Exam (60%) |
| Social psychology                      |   |                                                                        |                  |                  |                  | MCQ (10%)   |                  |                  |             |                         |                         | Essay (30%)            |                                              | Terminal Exam (60%) |
| Stage 1 Semester 2                     |   |                                                                        |                  |                  |                  |             |                  |                  |             |                         |                         |                        |                                              |                     |
| Week                                   | 1 | 2                                                                      | 3                | 4                | 5                | 6           | Reading week     | 7                | 8           | 9                       | 10                      | 11                     | 12                                           | Semester end        |
| Lifespan development                   |   |                                                                        |                  |                  |                  |             |                  | MCQ (20%)        |             |                         |                         | Practical report (20%) |                                              | Terminal Exam (60%) |
| Introduction to statistics             |   |                                                                        |                  |                  | MCQ (10%)        |             |                  |                  |             |                         |                         |                        | Practical exam (30%)                         | Terminal Exam (60%) |
| Cognitive psychology                   |   | Ongoing clicker participation throughout semester from week 2-11 (10%) |                  |                  |                  |             |                  |                  |             |                         | Lab report (30%)        |                        |                                              | Terminal Exam (60%) |
| Stage 2 Semester 1                     |   |                                                                        |                  |                  |                  |             |                  |                  |             |                         |                         |                        |                                              |                     |
| Week                                   | 1 | 2                                                                      | 3                | 4                | 5                | 6           | Reading week     | 7                | 8           | 9                       | 10                      | 11                     | 12                                           | Semester end        |
| Biological basis of behaviour          |   |                                                                        | MCQ (5%)         |                  |                  |             |                  |                  | Essay (15%) |                         |                         |                        | Group report (20%)                           | Terminal Exam (60%) |
| Applied statistics                     |   |                                                                        |                  |                  |                  |             |                  |                  |             |                         | Data analysis(40% )     |                        |                                              | Terminal Exam (60%) |
| Personality and individual differences |   |                                                                        |                  |                  |                  | Essay (20%) |                  |                  |             |                         |                         | Report (20%)           |                                              | Terminal Exam (60%) |
| Stage 2 Semester 2                     |   |                                                                        |                  |                  |                  |             |                  |                  |             |                         |                         |                        |                                              |                     |
| Week                                   | 1 | 2                                                                      | 3                | 4                | 5                | 6           | Reading week     | 7                | 8           | 9                       | 10                      | 11                     | 12                                           | Semester end        |
| Coaching psychology                    |   |                                                                        |                  | Case study (20%) |                  |             |                  |                  |             |                         |                         | Evaluatio n (20%)      | Presentatio n (20%)<br>Reflective blog (40%) | -                   |
| Psychology of learning                 |   |                                                                        |                  |                  |                  |             |                  | Lab report (20%) |             |                         | Learning leaflet(20%)   |                        |                                              | Terminal Exam (60%) |
| Psychology labs                        |   |                                                                        | Lab report (20%) |                  | Lab report (20%) |             | Lab report (20%) |                  |             |                         |                         |                        | Major report (40%)                           |                     |
| Applied research methods               |   |                                                                        |                  |                  |                  |             |                  |                  |             |                         | Research proposal (30%) | Presentati on (10%)    |                                              | Terminal Exam (60%) |

| Stage 3 Semester 1                             |   |   |   |   |                |   |              |              |   |             |             |              |                               |                     |
|------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|----------------|---|--------------|--------------|---|-------------|-------------|--------------|-------------------------------|---------------------|
| Week                                           | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5              | 6 | Reading week | 7            | 8 | 9           | 10          | 11           | 12                            | Semester end        |
| Final project part 1                           |   |   |   |   | Proposal (10%) |   |              |              |   |             |             |              |                               | -                   |
| Advanced developmental psychology              |   |   |   |   |                |   |              | Report (10%) |   | Essay (40%) |             |              | Report and presentation (50%) | -                   |
| Advanced cognitive psychology and neuroscience |   |   |   |   |                |   |              |              |   |             |             | Poster (40%) |                               | Terminal Exam (60%) |
| Criminal psychology                            |   |   |   |   |                |   |              |              |   |             | Essay (40%) |              |                               | Terminal Exam (60%) |

| Stage 3 Semester 2   |   |   |   |   |   |             |              |             |   |   |                    |                    |             |                     |
|----------------------|---|---|---|---|---|-------------|--------------|-------------|---|---|--------------------|--------------------|-------------|---------------------|
| Week                 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6           | Reading week | 7           | 8 | 9 | 10                 | 11                 | 12          | Semester end        |
| Final project part 2 |   |   |   |   |   |             |              |             |   |   | Dissertation (80%) | Presentation (10%) |             | -                   |
| Abnormal psychology  |   |   |   |   |   | Essay (40%) |              |             |   |   |                    |                    |             | Terminal Exam (60%) |
| Cyberpsychology      |   |   |   |   |   |             |              |             |   |   |                    |                    | Essay (40%) | Terminal Exam (60%) |
| Workplace psychology |   |   |   |   |   |             |              | Essay (40%) |   |   |                    |                    |             | Terminal Exam (60%) |



### 3.7.3 Contribution of assessment to final award

The award classification for the BA (Hons) in Psychology is based on students' performance at stage three of the programme. Specifically, the 60 credits of the final stage are based on the 20 credit *Final Project* module, which runs across two semesters, in addition to two 10 credit modules (*Abnormal Psychology*, *Advanced Developmental Psychology*) and four 5 credit modules (*Advanced Cognitive Psychology and Neuroscience*, *Criminal Psychology*, *Workplace Psychology* and *Cyberpsychology*). The final mark for the award is calculated on the weighted average of the marks for the individual modules. See Table 22 below for details on this breakdown.

**Table 22: Contribution of modules to final award**

| Module                                         | Credits | Proportion contribution to award |
|------------------------------------------------|---------|----------------------------------|
| Final Project                                  | 20      | 33.33%                           |
| Advanced developmental psychology              | 10      | 16.67%                           |
| Advanced cognitive psychology and neuroscience | 5       | 8.33%                            |
| Criminal psychology                            | 5       | 8.33%                            |
| Abnormal psychology                            | 10      | 16.67%                           |
| Cyberpsychology                                | 5       | 8.33%                            |
| Workplace psychology                           | 5       | 8.33%                            |
| Total                                          | 60      | 100%                             |

A students' final award classification is based on the following marking scheme.

| Final grade | Award |
|-------------|-------|
| 70+         | H1    |
| 60-69       | H21   |
| 50-59       | H22   |
| 40-49       | Pass  |
| <40         | Fail  |

### 3.7.4 Reflections on assessment strategy

As part of the programmatic review process, the team undertook a thorough appraisal of assessment strategies on the programme. This process is outlined in more detail in section 7.1.4. As part of this review and other feedback from stakeholders, a number of changes are being proposed to assessment as part of the review. In particular, a concerted effort has been taken to reduce the degree of assessment burden on students, to ensure consistency in workload expected of students, and also to employ a number of new innovative assessments, especially with respect to those newly proposed modules. In addition, the team proposes to reduce the number and weighting on terminal examinations.

## 4 Programme management and evolution over the past five years

### 4.1 Management of the psychology programme

The BA (Hons) in psychology is staffed from within the School of Business in NCI. All the programme lecturing team are qualified in psychology with most holding PhDs in a wide variety of subject specialisms (see research interests of the psychology team in the earlier Section 2.2).

Each lecturer is responsible for the delivery of their own module(s) in keeping with the QQI-approved teaching, learning, and assessment strategy, however the programme team also meet regularly to discuss aspects of the programme delivery as well as student progress and well-being.

Since 2015/2016, there has been a staff member assigned to each year group on the full-time programme to act as a core point of contact for that particular year. This enables students to get to know one staff member well, in addition to their lecturers. Furthermore, the programme has a dedicated programme coordinator who can advise students in policies and procedures, as well as facilitating the process of requests for extensions and/or deferrals in particular modules.

Above this, each of the two schools, the School of Business and School of Computing are managed by a Dean and Vice Decanal Structure. The School of Business has 2 Vice Deans, one with responsibility for Postgraduate Studies and Research and the other with responsibility for Undergraduate Studies. The Dean has responsibility for effective day to day management of the School and implementing the quality assurance processes of NCI within the School. The Vice Dean has responsibility for the management of all full-time and part-time postgraduate programmes and supporting the implementation of the College Research Strategy within the School.

### 4.2 Evolution of the psychology programme from 2012 - present

The BA (Hons) psychology programme was initially validated in 2012 however, while its fundamental structure and aims have remained the same, it has undergone a number of minor changes over the past few years. These changes, all of which have been previously approved by QQI, were primarily motivated by PSI requirements, but were also influenced by external examiner input and staff expertise, most of whom were recruited after the programme had been initially validated. In addition, prior to these changes, members of the psychology team carried out a number of site visits, for example to the psychology departments in DCU and Maynooth University, to establish the type of laboratory facilities that were in place in support the psychology programmes there. This influenced the decisions made regarding the purchase of various experimental and psychophysiological equipment for the programme.

A number of new modules have been integrated into the programme since it first began in 2012. For example, given the requirement for PSI-accredited psychology courses to entail practical components, we have now included this as a central feature of the programme (e.g. in the module *Psychology Labs*) and have also allowed for more in-depth study of certain core fields (e.g. *Advanced Developmental Psychology*, *Advanced Cognitive Psychology*). A summary of these approved changes is given below. These were approved in two blocks in 2014/2015 and then 2015/2016. See Appendix 7 for more detail on the changes and feedback from external stakeholders.

**Table 23: Changes in modules on the programme and their rationale (2012-present)**

| Year      | Change                                     | Rationale                                                                                                                 |
|-----------|--------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2014/2015 | Introduction of the module <i>Advanced</i> | PSI require that there is at least some advanced coverage of the core pillars of psychology therefore a decision was made |

|                  |                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                  | <i>Developmental Psychology</i>                                                                                                                    | to introduce this module in 2014. The introduction of this module was strengthened by the college's Early Learning Initiative (ELI) which also provide input into its delivery and assessment strategy.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>2014/2015</b> | Change in title of <i>Learning Theories</i> to <i>Psychology of Learning and Behaviour Analysis</i>                                                | This name change was made to more accurately reflect the content and focus of the module on behaviour analytic techniques which is another important aspect of psychology. At the time there was also some minor changes made to the learning outcomes of this module to more accurately reflect this perspective.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>2015/2016</b> | Change in title of <i>Applied Introduction to Psychology</i> to <i>Applied Introduction and history of psychology</i>                              | This title change reflected a greater emphasis placed on the historical background to psychology.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>2015/2016</b> | Change in number of assessments in <i>Applied Introduction to Psychology</i> to <i>Applied Introduction and history of psychology</i> from 10 to 5 | Completing 10 assignments in one semester was deemed as an unnecessary burden for students for one module. The decision to reduce this to 5 still meets the MIMPLOs.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>2015/2016</b> | Introduction of a new module <i>Psychology Labs</i>                                                                                                | A new 5 credit module in <i>Psychology Labs</i> was introduced so that students could get greater practical experience in the field of psychology. This fulfils PSI's requirement that students have sufficient opportunity to engage in practical research work. In order to accommodate this change, the credits required for <i>Applied Research Methods</i> were reduced from 10 to 5                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>2015/2016</b> | Two new 5 credit modules in <i>Advanced Cognitive Psychology and Neuroscience</i> and <i>Criminal Psychology</i>                                   | The introduction of the module <i>Advanced Cognitive Psychology and Neuroscience</i> filled a gap for a dedicated module in advanced cognitive and biopsychology as determined within the PSI criteria, while introducing <i>Criminal Psychology</i> exposed students to a further applied field in psychology which draws on staff expertise. Both modules were accommodated by reducing the credit weightings for <i>Workplace Psychology</i> and <i>Media Psychology</i> (renamed <i>Cyberpsychology</i> to better reflect course content) from 10 to 5 credits. These modules are considered non-core from the perspective of PSI. |
| <b>2015/2016</b> | Increase in credits for Final Project module and retirement of                                                                                     | An analysis of other psychology providers revealed that often the Final Year Project in psychology is weighted at 20 credits. In order to accommodate this, the previously validated module in <i>Psychometrics and Contemporary Research</i> module was retired, as much of the content was                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |

|  |                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|--|----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  | Psychometrics module | deemed to be covered elsewhere in the programme (e.g. many of the research techniques from cognition and neuroscience are covered in the <i>Advanced Cognitive Psychology and Neuroscience</i> module, while further principles of psychometric testing are covered within the <i>Research Methods</i> modules, as well as within <i>Personality and Individual Differences</i> ). |
|--|----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

All of the above changes were made in order to enhance the range of content that students were exposed to without significantly changing the structure of the programme nor its learning outcomes. In addition to implementing these changes, the programme team has continued to reflect on the delivery of the programme in conjunction with relevant stakeholders. This process is explained in more detail in section 5.

### 4.3 Programme specific quality assurance mechanisms

The programme adheres to the general QA guidelines in the college however there are two additional regulations that are specific to the psychology programme:

#### 1. No pass-by-compensation is currently permitted for any module

When PSI accredited the programme, one point that was emphasised by the panel was that students should not be allowed to progress if they have received a mark in any stage 2 module falling below 40% (see PSI report which is included in the appendix) The rationale given for this was to ensure students reach the minimum level of competency in the core stage 2 pillars of psychology before progressing to the next stage. It should be noted that this requirement had only a minor impact on progression statistics with a total of 6 students over all five intakes of the programme failing to progress despite being eligible for pass-by-compensation based on QQI regulations.

For the current programmatic review, the team have taken the decision to permit pass-by-compensation for stage 1 modules and will highlight this issue with PSI on our next accreditation in the academic year 2018/2019 with a view to enabling pass-by-compensation for stage two and three modules from this point forward.

#### 2. Students must submit all pieces of coursework and sit all examinations in order to pass the module.

In addition, on module failure, students are required to resubmit the failed component rather than simply sit an end of semester exam. This is to ensure that all learning outcomes are met for every module.

### 4.4 Review of quality systems and processes

In line with the QA policies and procedures, the programme team employ a number of quality systems and processes to ensure the programme runs efficiently. For example, regular committee meetings are held throughout the course of each academic year (more detail on the nature of these meetings is provided in section 5.3). This gives staff an opportunity to reflect on current issues and concerns regarding students, the programme itself, academic performance, and any other related matters. This ongoing process has contributed to the evolution of the psychology programme and has guided the programme review.

An important aspect of the programme's quality systems involves the review of assessment material. These procedures were outlined in section 3.7.1. To ensure that marks and standards are applied consistently in assessment, all examination material is reviewed internally prior to submission for

external review, and a sample of all scripts are second-marked by another staff member. In the case of Final Year Projects, every project is independently blind marked by two staff members (the supervisor and one other), before a sample is sent to extern. When occasionally discrepancies arise in marks between examiners, these are discussed at length and a third marker is consulted if necessary. However, generally there is high agreement between marks awarded for assessment material which illustrates good reliability between markers. This is consistent with comments from the external examiners who largely agree with the marking schemes applied.

Some additional aspects of our QA procedures are detailed in the next section. For example, in order to seek student feedback, the team hold regular class-reps meetings. In addition, feedback on every modules on the programme is sought each semester. This feedback has been very informative in guiding the programme review process.

## 5 Contemporary evaluation of the programme by stakeholders

In conducting the programme review, the psychology team consulted a number of parties in order to consider the strengths and weaknesses of the psychology programme, as well as potential areas for development. A summary of the key findings of this consultation process is detailed below.

### 5.1 Learner feedback

#### 5.1.1 Class reps meetings

The college has a class reps policy whereby each student cohort elects two representatives whose role it is to represent the class on academic issues. Regular meetings are held with class reps and programme directors, as well as college support staff (e.g. student support services, library and IT staff). In these meetings students have the opportunity to raise any issues of concern with the relevant staff members and actions are taken where appropriate.

In the five years since the psychology programme has been running, the class reps have been largely positive on the programme with no major issues uncovered. On the occasion when concerns have been raised (e.g. regarding access to IT services or the delivery of student feedback), these issues are dealt with by the relevant personnel. However, it is acknowledged that this is only one means of learner feedback, which is likely subject to a number of biases and flaws. Currently in NCI the class representative system is being reviewed to establish if this might be more effectively managed and delivered in the future.

#### 5.1.2 Ongoing module feedback

As part of the quality assurance process, learners are regularly asked to reflect on every individual module that they are currently taking. Typically, this data is gathered in week 8 of each semester. Here students are asked to rate their agreement with a number of statements relating to various aspects of the modules studied on a 6-point scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (6).

As part of the review process, the data collected on all module feedback between the academic years of 2012/2013 – 2015/2016 has been collated (total N = 391). Figure 4 displays a summary of the seven global indices, while a more detailed analysis of each of the questions posed as they relate to each of these indices is displayed in Figure 5.

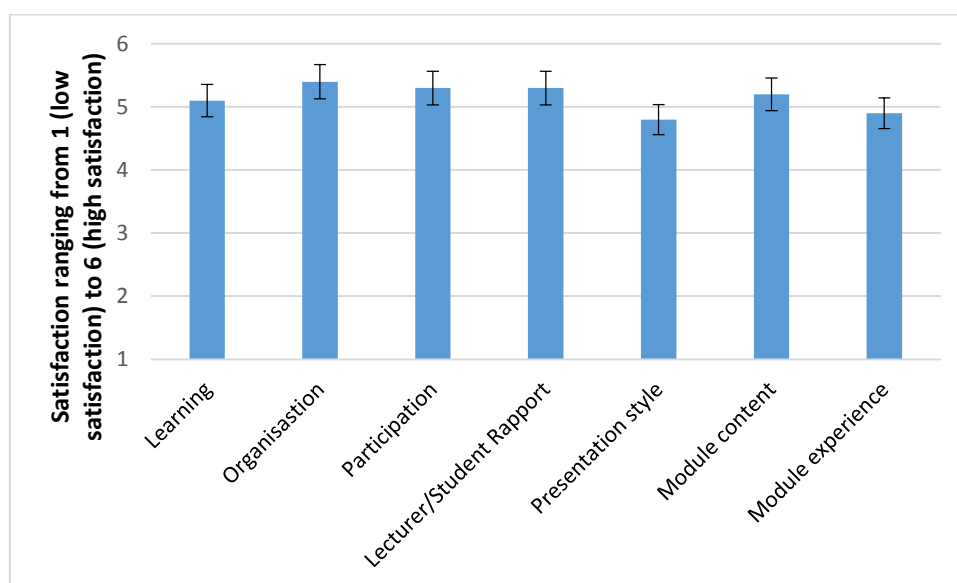
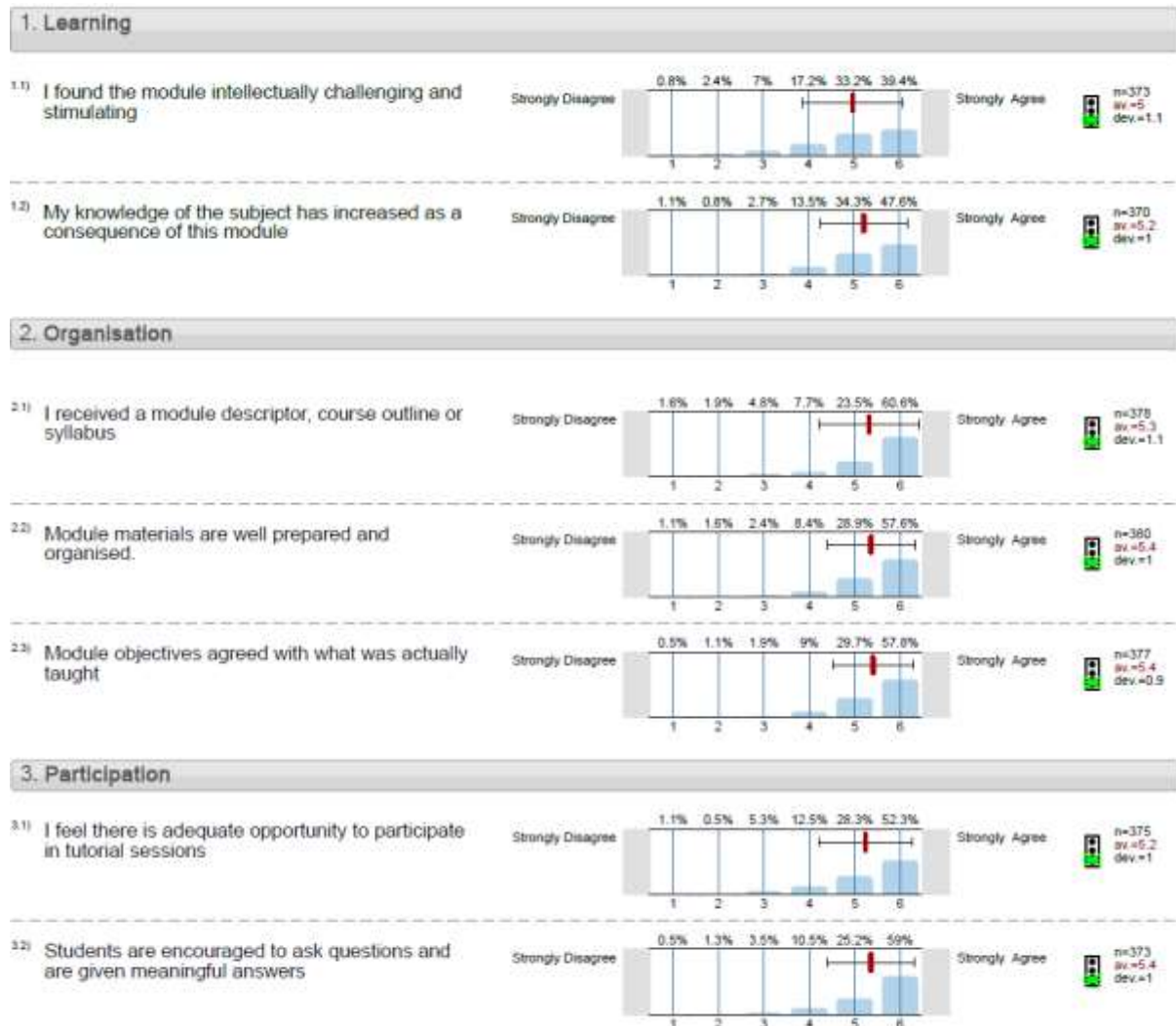


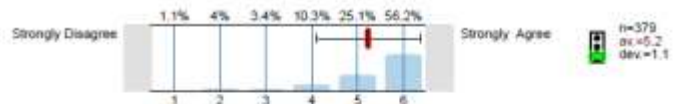
Figure 4: Amalgamation of all module feedback (N = 391) from the years 2012/2013 to 2015/2016



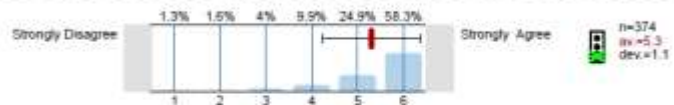


#### 4. Lecturer/Student Rapport

- 4.1) Lecturer encourages students to seek help/ advice in or outside of the class

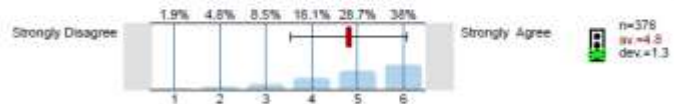


- 4.2) Lecturer gave honest feedback & coaching

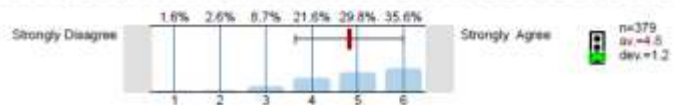


#### 5. Presentation Style

- 5.1) Presentation style helped me give my attention in class.

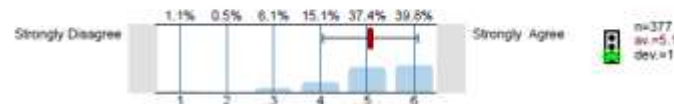


- 5.2) Different styles of presentation were used when appropriate

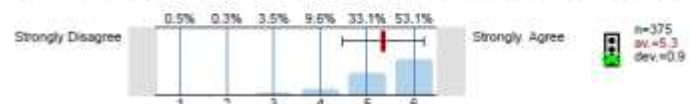


#### 6. Module Content

- 6.1) Module content was at an appropriate level of difficulty.

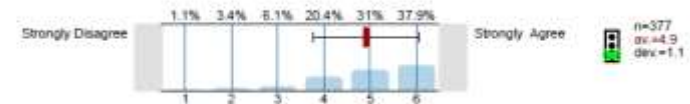


- 6.2) Module material was of high quality and up to date

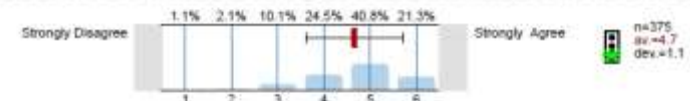


#### 7. Module Experience

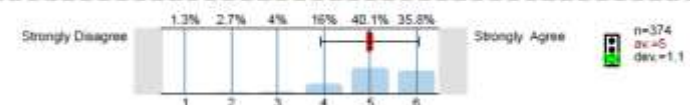
- 7.1) I am comfortable with the amount of material covered



- 7.2) I put the required effort into this module



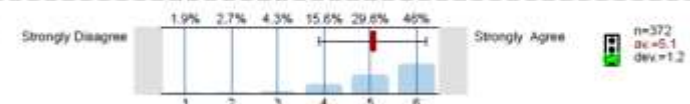
- 7.3) I have a clear idea of what is expected of me in this module



- 7.4) Module time was well used



- 7.5) I feel that the assessment structure in this module was appropriate.







**Figure 5: Amalgamation of individual responses to questions for each module**

Though not presented here, learners are also given the opportunity to include qualitative comments on their module feedback. These comments are delivered to the relevant lecturer and are used to inform future deliveries of the modules.

The data presented in Figures 4 and 5 combines all cohorts and years however analysis of the individual groups revealed that these trends were consistent for each year of the programme examined. It can thus be concluded that learners on the programme have been very positive regarding their module experiences. A minor caveat to note however is that this survey is completed on a voluntary basis, so response rates may not be as high as would be desired by the team. Given this, the team decided to undertake a more representative survey of the programme by those who were currently enrolled.

### 5.1.3 Programme level survey

As part of the programme review process, the programme team, in consultation with the QA department, designed a survey in order to get feedback on students on the structure and content of the programme. Unlike the typical means of online administration which is used for collecting module feedback, this survey was administered to all student groups in class towards the end of semester 1 with a view of getting a more representative sample of those studying across all stages of the programme. In total, 109 number of responses were received which accounts for over 50% of registered students. This survey involved both quantitative and qualitative elements, the broad descriptive results of which are detailed below.

#### 5.1.3.1 Student engagement

Students were asked to report on a number of measures of engagement over the course of the academic year including their attendance, participation, use of college resources, and average hours of study per week. As can be seen from the table below, most students reported being reasonably engaged with the part-time group more likely to report high levels of attendance and active participation in class. Encouragingly, all students surveyed reported making at least some use of student resources, however only a small number reported spending more than 12 additional hours studying per week.

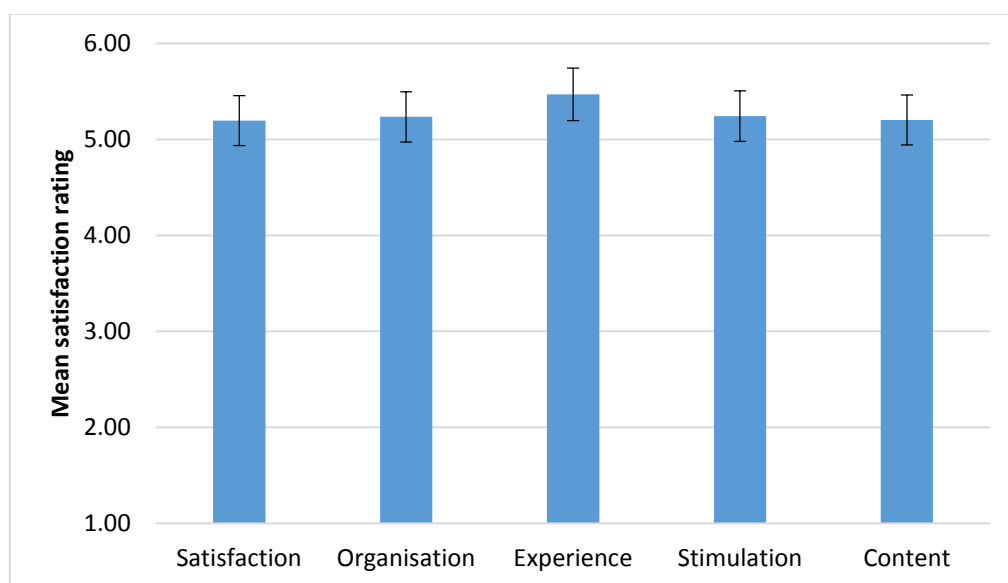
**Table 24: Self-reported student engagement (N = 109)**

| Measure       | Overall | Full-time (n = 83) | Part-time (n = 26) |
|---------------|---------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Attendance    |         |                    |                    |
| Less than 50% | 3.1%    | 2.7%               | 4.0%               |
| 50-90%        | 50%     | 50%                | 26.1%              |

|                      |       |       |       |
|----------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| More than 90%        | 46.9% | 34.5% | 69.6% |
| Active participation |       |       |       |
| Never                | 13.8% | 18.3% | 0%    |
| Sometimes            | 55.3% | 62.0% | 34.8% |
| Regularly            | 30.9% | 19.7% | 65.2% |
| Use of NCI resources |       |       |       |
| Never                | 0%    | 0%    | 0%    |
| Sometimes            | 13.5% | 13.5% | 13.6% |
| Regularly            | 86.5% | 86.5% | 86.4% |
| Average weekly study |       |       |       |
| Less than 4 hours    | 25.3% | 28.8% | 13.6% |
| 4-12 hours           | 67.4% | 64.4% | 77.3% |
| More than 12 hours   | 7.4%  | 6.8%  | 9.1%  |

### 5.1.3.2 Overall student satisfaction

Students were also requested to reflect on their overall satisfaction with the programme as rated on a series of 6-point scale questions ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (6). Thus higher scores indicate higher levels of satisfaction with various aspects of the programme. Results for the whole cohort are displayed in Figure 6 while Table 25 shows a breakdown of responses per cohort.



**Figure 6: Overall satisfaction with programme. See below table for specific questions that relate to these five indices**

**Table 25: Student satisfaction across the five student groupings (range 1-6)**

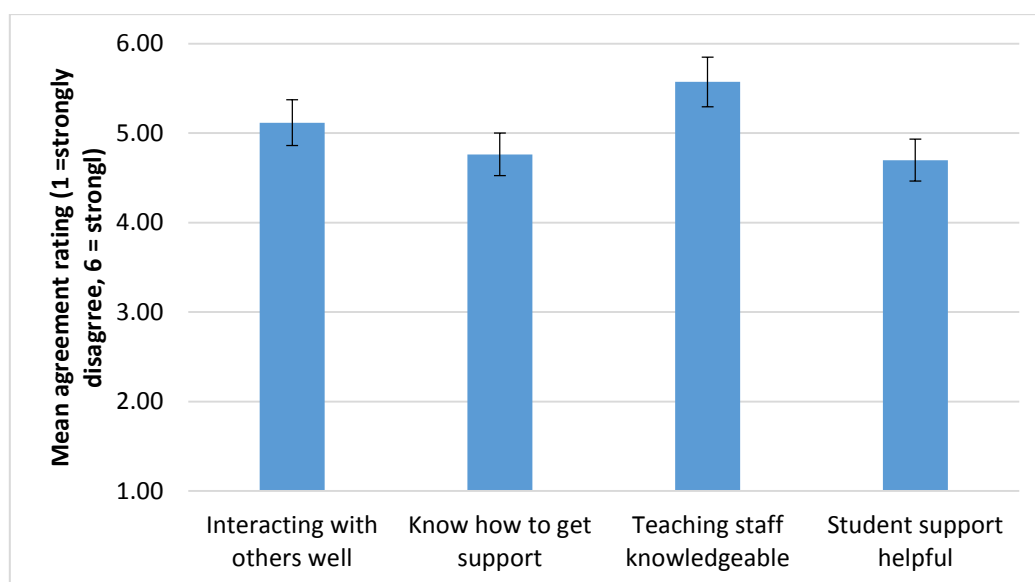
|                                                               | 1st year<br>FT (n = 39) | 2nd year<br>FT (n = 21) | 3rd year<br>FT (n = 24) | 1st year<br>PT (n = 12) | 2nd year<br>PT (n = 14) |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| I am satisfied with my learning experience on this programme. | 5.13                    | 4.56                    | 5.00                    | 5.64                    | 5.27                    |
| The course is well organized and is running smoothly.         | 5.16                    | 4.74                    | 4.75                    | 5.40                    | 5.38                    |
| My overall educational experience at NCI is positive.         | 5.55                    | 4.84                    | 4.91                    | 5.90                    | 5.58                    |

|                                               |      |      |      |      |      |
|-----------------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| I find this programme of study stimulating.   | 5.24 | 5.05 | 4.96 | 5.33 | 5.31 |
| The content of this programme is appropriate. | 5.18 | 5.00 | 5.00 | 5.33 | 5.25 |

Taken together, this illustrates that students on the programme were generally very satisfied with the experience. Examination of the different cohorts illustrated that the second year students displayed slightly lower scores than the other groups, although this could be attributable to many factors which are later discussed.

### 5.1.3.3 Learner and staff support

Students were also asked a number of questions regarding their experience with teaching and support staff, as well as whether they felt they were interacting well with students on the programme. As can be seen from the below figure, students generally reported positive experiences on all most of these aspects. Not all students reported that they knew where to get support for the programme however. This is something which should be reflected on in the context of programme review as the college has a number of means of support available to students (stated elsewhere in the document). It is possible that greater transparency regarding these supports and their availability could be communicated to students at an earlier stage of the programme.



**Figure 7: Interaction with others on the programme**

Though not displayed here, the responses to this set of questions were similar for all groups although the second year full-time cohort had slightly lower scores than the other cohorts, which is keeping with the data presented in Table 25.

### 5.1.3.4 Assessment

An important aspect to consider as part of the programme review is the assessment strategies employed across modules as well as the effectiveness of feedback mechanisms for assessment. To this end we also asked students to reflect upon this element of the course in a number of questions. The results are displayed in Table 20, both for the overall group and for each specific cohort.

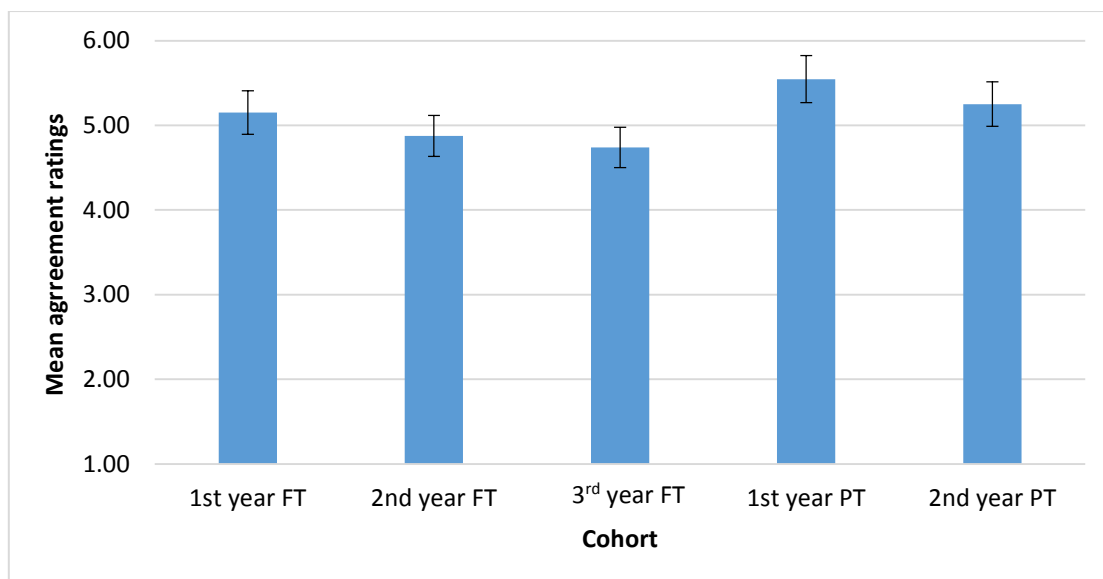
**Table 26: Assessment and feedback across all student cohorts**

|                                                                        | 1st year FT<br>(n = 39) | 2nd year<br>FT (n = 21) | 3rd year<br>FT (n = 24) | 1st year<br>PT (n = 12) | 2nd year<br>PT (n = 14) | Overall<br>(N = 109) |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|
| The criteria used in marking have been clear in advance.               | 4.82                    | 4.47                    | 4.55                    | 4.45                    | 5.08                    | <b>4.68</b>          |
| Assessment arrangements and marking have been fair.                    | 4.91                    | 4.59                    | 4.27                    | 4.80                    | 5.23                    | <b>4.76</b>          |
| Feedback on my work has been prompt.                                   | 4.69                    | 4.16                    | 4.14                    | 5.50                    | 4.75                    | <b>4.65</b>          |
| I have received detailed comments on my work.                          | 4.53                    | 4.38                    | 4.27                    | 5.00                    | 4.23                    | <b>4.48</b>          |
| Feedback on my work has helped me clarify things I did not understand. | 4.36                    | 4.18                    | 4.33                    | 5.10                    | 4.15                    | <b>4.43</b>          |

As can be seen, in comparison to scores on earlier items pertaining to overall satisfaction with the course, satisfaction with assessment was slightly lower. Although the majority of students were reasonably satisfied with the assessment strategies and marking, these results may suggest that more attention could be paid to feedback mechanisms surrounding assessments. Interestingly, those in the part-time group reported higher levels of satisfaction regarding feedback and comments than the full-time group. This may be because this cohort of students is more likely to engage with feedback and seek further clarification on issues. However, the slightly lower satisfaction regarding assessment has influenced our proposed changes in assessment strategy, whereby we aim to reduce the burden of assessments for students. This is a particular concern for students at stage two of the programme which may account for their slightly lower satisfaction ratings for this in comparison to the other cohorts.

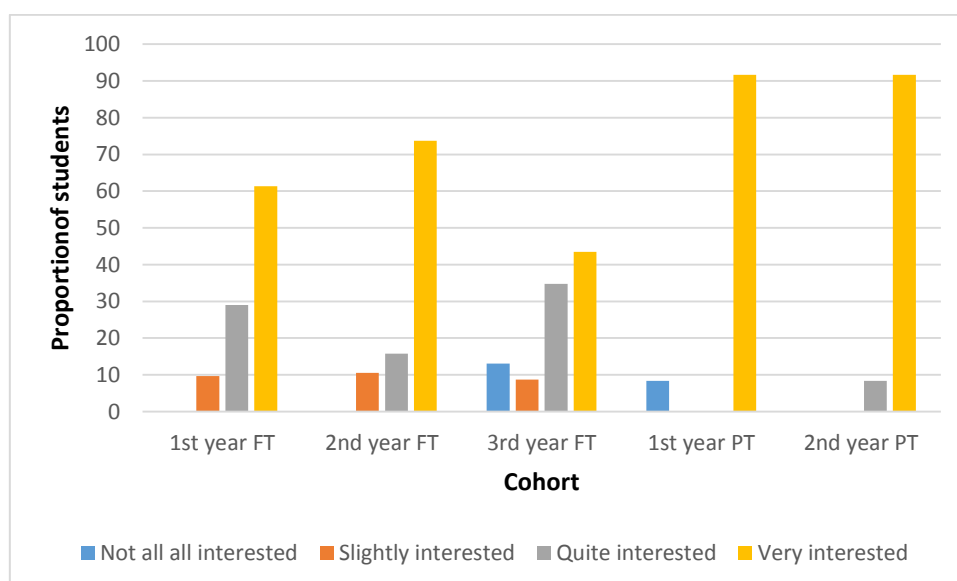
#### **5.1.3.5 Further career and study**

Students were also asked to reflect on whether they felt they were improving their career prospects by undertaking the programme given that an important goal is to ensure that students leave with a wide variety of transferable skills. The majority reported that they were, with slightly higher scores reported for those students in the part-time programme. This may reflect a greater motivation for part-time students to undertake the programme due to a desire to change or further their career.



**Figure 8: Mean response to the question “I am improving my career prospects by undertaking this programme” (where figures on the Y axis indicate that: 1 = “Strongly disagree”; 6 = “Strongly Agree”)**

Students were also asked to reflect on whether they would be interested in pursuing further postgraduate education in psychology, as rated on a 4-points scale (ranging from “not at all interested” to “very interested”). The figure below shows the proportion of students who responded to the various four options. As can be seen here, the majority of students expressed a strong interest in pursuing postgraduate education in psychology, with very few indicating that they had no interest in all. The third year full-time group expressed the least interest, although this may be because this group has a clearer idea of what they are going to do following graduation. In addition, it would be expected that many graduates will enter employment following the programme, as is also evidenced from the earlier presented careers data.



**Figure 9: Proportion of students specifying different levels of interest in pursuing postgraduate education**

### 5.1.3.6 Qualitative feedback

| Themes                     | The students highlighted the following as aspects they enjoyed the most                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Lecturers</b>           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Lecturers are very knowledgeable, diplomatic and kind”</li> <li>• “Lecturers are enthusiastic”</li> <li>• “Lecturers are open-minded and students can easily express their opinions”</li> <li>• “Good interaction with lecturers and students”</li> <li>• “Lecturers are very engaging and helpful”</li> <li>• “There has been good effort to make the topics interesting and accessible”</li> <li>• “The lecturers are very professional and always have a proper answer to your questions”</li> <li>• “Lecturers are approachable”</li> <li>• “The lecturers encourage critical thinking”</li> <li>• “The lecturers are friendly and approachable- they are willing to take the time to talk to you”</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Modules and content</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Relevance of content to everyday life and the applied/practical nature of the content”</li> <li>• “The content is interesting and accessible”</li> <li>• “There is a good mixture of teaching methods such as slides, video, discussions, group work”</li> <li>• “I prefer the scientific approach to psychology as opposed to other colleges psychoanalytic approach”</li> <li>• “The access to moodle is very practical and useful – good notes and reading material”</li> <li>• “The content is challenging, but not inaccessible”</li> </ul> <p>The modules that students favoured the most were social psychology, criminal psychology, biopsychology, developmental psychology and the history of psychology. However it should be noted that all of these modules took place in semester 1, therefore those in semester 2 were not considered here.</p> |
| <b>Class structure</b>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “The class size is comfortable and makes it easier to participate”</li> <li>• Interactive discussions, group work and lectures: “I enjoy the interaction we have in class. There are class discussions giving feedback on what we would have done. This is so helpful to me as an individual because I at least know what I have understood”</li> <li>• Guest lectures</li> <li>• Tutorials</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Assessment</b>          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Clicker is a good test of learned knowledge”</li> <li>• “I enjoy when the modules are graded by more than one approach”</li> <li>• “I like to 100% CA modules as they are interactive and cover learning material well”</li> <li>• “I like the detailed marking and the fair assessment provided”</li> <li>• “I enjoy the time frame available before assignments are due. It provides more time to reflect and do the best possible for the given work”</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

In addition, students were asked two open-ended questions which were designed to aid in the programme review process:

1. What are the aspects of the programme that you enjoy most? Why?
2. Which aspects of the programme might be improved? How?

Students response were thematically analysed with the core findings detailed in the tables below along with sample responses to support each theme.

**Table 27: Perceived positives of programme**

| Themes                     | The students highlighted the following as aspects they enjoyed the most                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Lecturers</b>           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Lecturers are very knowledgeable, diplomatic and kind”</li> <li>• “Lecturers are enthusiastic”</li> <li>• “Lecturers are open-minded and students can easily express their opinions”</li> <li>• “Good interaction with lecturers and students”</li> <li>• “Lecturers are very engaging and helpful”</li> <li>• “There has been good effort to make the topics interesting and accessible”</li> <li>• “The lecturers are very professional and always have a proper answer to your questions”</li> <li>• “Lecturers are approachable”</li> <li>• “The lecturers encourage critical thinking”</li> <li>• “The lecturers are friendly and approachable- they are willing to take the time to talk to you”</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Modules and content</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Relevance of content to everyday life and the applied/practical nature of the content”</li> <li>• “The content is interesting and accessible”</li> <li>• “There is a good mixture of teaching methods such as slides, video, discussions, group work”</li> <li>• “I prefer the scientific approach to psychology as opposed to other colleges psychoanalytic approach”</li> <li>• “The access to moodle is very practical and useful – good notes and reading material”</li> <li>• “The content is challenging, but not inaccessible”</li> </ul> <p>The modules that students favoured the most were social psychology, criminal psychology, biopsychology, developmental psychology and the history of psychology. However it should be noted that all of these modules took place in semester 1, therefore those in semester 2 were not considered here.</p> |
| <b>Class structure</b>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “The class size is comfortable and makes it easier to participate”</li> <li>• Interactive discussions, group work and lectures: “I enjoy the interaction we have in class. There are class discussions giving feedback on what we would have done. This is so helpful to me as an individual because I at least know what I have understood”</li> <li>• Guest lectures</li> <li>• Tutorials</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Assessment</b>          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Clicker is a good test of learned knowledge”</li> <li>• “I enjoy when the modules are graded by more than one approach”</li> <li>• “I like to 100% CA modules as they are interactive and cover learning material well”</li> <li>• “I like the detailed marking and the fair assessment provided”</li> <li>• “I enjoy the time frame available before assignments are due. It provides more time to reflect and do the best possible for the given work”</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

**Table 28: Areas of programme that could be improved**

| Themes             | The students highlighted the following as aspects of the programme that could be improved              |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Timetabling</b> | Timetabling of lectures was the most frequently cited complaint from students. Comments made included: |

|                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Less long breaks through the timetable if possible – more classes on the one day”</li> <li>• “The timetable was probably a big contribution to absences this semester”</li> <li>• “Having three one-lecture days is deterring and pointless”</li> <li>• “If there is a problem with lecture timetable, it should be communicated quicker”</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Feedback on assignments</b> | <p>Assignment feedback was the second most cited complaint from students. More thorough feedback was requested both on how the student did in the assignment and on what was expected from the student when the assignment was given. Comments made included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Without good feedback it’s hard to improve”</li> <li>• “Feedback could be clearer and more specific”</li> <li>• “More help in relation to assignments...be more clear of what is being asked”</li> <li>• “I feel there is not a lot of emphasis put on how to improve marks, or pointing out mistakes made, so that we can be aware of them in the future”</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Lectures</b>                | <p>Certain aspects of lectures were highlighted as needing improvement, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Breaks: “Need a break in the two hour lectures”</li> <li>• Time management/ class structure: “The time management within some of the lectures could be better”; “Some class structure not as professionally put together as should be”</li> <li>• Repetition: “A lot of repetition – can make me feel like I’ve wasted my time coming in”</li> <li>• Presentation style: “Different forms of teaching instead of just powerpoints”</li> <li>• Advanced developmental psychology – too much focus on ELI and not enough on development: “The advanced developmental module should be less focused on the work of ELI and more focused on how a child develops”</li> <li>• Notes/ lecture slides should be posted earlier on moodle “Have lecture slides available in advance of class”</li> <li>• Lecture pace: “Go slower in class so there’s more time to understand each topic properly”</li> </ul> |
| <b>Other skills requested</b>  | <p>Some students requested extra workshops and further skill development in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practical work</li> <li>• Creative work</li> <li>• Group work</li> <li>• Academic writing</li> <li>• Understanding research papers</li> <li>• Report writing</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Library</b>                 | <p>Some students requested a greater quantity of books and more online resources for accessing journals.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |

The programme team have carefully reflected on this feedback, and in particular the areas that students feel could be improved. The most common complaint regarding timetabling of the full-time programme is unfortunately outside the remit of the team at present, however this has been fed back to the college’s central timetabling office and should be taken into consideration for future deliveries.

Regarding assessment, the team have acknowledged that some students expressed concerns over feedback. However, it should be noted that, when interpreting the quantitative data in section 5.4.3.1, most were satisfied with the level of feedback received (indeed examination of the positive qualitative comments revealed that many were happy with the detail in feedback received). It should also be noted that this survey took place towards the end of semester 1 when students may have been waiting



for feedback on assignments. It is general college policy that feedback is delivered within two weeks so this is a deadline which the team endeavours to stick to.

The comments regarding teaching and learning were generally very positive with students enjoying the modules and the content covered. While some expressed concerns over presentation styles, others acknowledged that they enjoyed the range of teaching strategies employed. In terms of one particular module in Advanced Developmental Psychology, there are some proposed changes to this which also take into account the comments made.

Some students made suggestions for other skills and training that they would like to receive, however many of these are embedded within existing modules, and/or are available as extracurricular supports for students within the college (e.g. through the “Getting to Grips” academic sessions). The programme team acknowledge that perhaps the presence of these sessions could be made more visible. The availability of resources in the library may have been an issue for this year’s first year students given that the numbers were larger than anticipated. In light of this, the library will make more copies of core texts available. The team are also moving more towards a greater use of online resources (e.g. through the provision of eBooks and online journals) which will reduce the demand for physical texts in the future.

## 5.2 Graduate feedback

As is evidenced from the data presented in Section 3.5, many of the graduates of the programme are successfully engaged in further postgraduate study or employment, which suggests that the programme prepares them well for the future career.

In addition, as part of the review, feedback on the programme was directly sought from graduates. Specifically, a number of former students were consulted with regards to their experience on the programme in terms of perceived strengths and weaknesses. They were also asked to reflect on whether undertaking the programme had been useful in their current career. All the graduates contacted were either currently enrolled in postgraduate programmes in other institutions or were in full-time employment.

### 5.2.1 Relevance of programme to current career

All those who responded noted that the knowledge and skills they had accrued over the course of the programme had been of great benefit in their current position. For example, one graduate engaged in postgraduate study noted:

*“I personally feel that the psychology programme at NCI has been of significant help as it has allowed to me to reach my current position as a PhD student. I feel that the wide range of modules that are offered at NCI granted me the opportunity to discover the vast and extensive areas of psychology, which allowed me to effectively decide which of these areas I found to be the most intriguing and suitable to my skills and talents. I also felt that the variety of assignments (such as lab reports and poster presentations) significantly aided my career development as they allowed me to greatly enhance the necessary skills of a researcher that are required within the field of psychology. There was also a great deal of emphasis put on subjects such as statistics that will greatly help the future career of any psychologist.”*

Similarly, another graduate pursuing research stated:

*“...the psychology programme at NCI offered me a greater insight into the process of conducting impactful psychological research. Before enrolling at NCI my knowledge of psychology was broad and misguided, however, upon graduating from the psychology programme my understanding of the different aspects of psychology and my ability to carry out research have helped me to obtain a place on a psychological research PhD programme.”*

In addition, one current PhD student who is also teaching in psychology noted that...

*"I still refer to materials and work from then (sometimes when writing, but especially when searching for inspiration on preparing for tutoring and demonstrating sessions). Many of the assignments were in retrospect, quite practical exercises, easing the transition to future writing and analysis in further levels of study. Though most of all the staff had been very helpful and supportive both during the course and since graduating."*

Graduates contacted who were in full-time employment also reported great value from the career. For example, one graduate who is currently employed in animal welfare following a masters in the area mentioned some of the valuable transferable skills gained on the programme. Specifically, she noted that...

*"... The skills I learned in my psychology degree e.g. critical thinking, reviewing relevant literature etc., helped me a lot in my further education after leaving NCI. In terms of my current career, my degree gave me invaluable skills such as efficient team working, leadership skills, insights into group work and conflict resolution, problem solving and goal setting, a positive attitude and work ethic [sic] that I feel have helped me become a valuable asset to my current company."*

Another graduate similarly stated the relevance of the programme to her current career in youth work and was able to explicitly mention some modules that were particularly relevant to this field.

*"I definitely think that my degree has helped me tremendously in my current career. I work with juvenile delinquents and at risk kids with a prevention programme. I facilitate evidenced based CBT groups to help the youths with their decision making process."*

*I think that Personality and Individual differences, Coaching Psych and Lifespan development really helped me with these aspects in my career. "*

Another graduate in employment expressed value in the relevance of her studies for her current career in retail management. She noted that she had benefitted from the programme as it taught her....

*"....many important communication methods.....really allows me to take a well-rounded view when faced with a problem that others may attach some more bias toward. The modules themselves were quite broad and allowed us as student psychologists an insight into very different types of further psychology topics of interest. Overall I feel happy with how the course went and the structure was well-planned and organised with great supporting staff and lecturers when needed. Particularly in my line of work now as part of retail management social psychology and organisational behaviour as well as statistics and research methods have all helped me particularly in my day to day tasks. What I have tried to integrate in my job would be coaching psychology to plan out long and short term goals etc., and to further enhance my staff be the best they feel they can be at their job."*

In sum this feedback illustrates the range of skills that were developed by students over the course of the programme which showcases the range of directions graduates from the programme may follow.

### **5.2.2 Key strengths of programme**

Aside from those points mentioned above, graduates reported a number of additional strengths in relation to the programme. In particular, graduates had high praise for the staff, teaching and learning strategies (in particular small group discussions), and the range of modules studied.

Examples of strengths perceived by one graduate included:

*"Excellent staff in the psychology department. Attentive and engaging lecturers who take the time to help students with any issues they have. Also alongside the typical delivery of lectures,*

*there was frequently an element of discussion amongst the class encouraged when time or subject matter allowed."*

Similarly, another graduate noted that the aspect of the programme they enjoyed the most was that:

*"the lecturers actively encouraged discussion and debates around various different topics within psychology. As the size of each class was generally small, I felt that this greatly aided me in attaining a clear, extensive and comprehensive understanding of the course content. I also felt that the lecturers provided excellent support and were very approachable for any issues concerning the course and what to do after the degree. "*

Another former student stated that the modules offered were extremely interesting and also *"tremendously practical for helping to offer students an experience of the many career paths accessible"*

This student also noted that:

*"the small size classrooms and subsequent accessibility of lecturers created a pleasurable environment in which to learn. I believe these surroundings ensured that I always felt that any questions or issues I experienced during my time at NCI were treated with the upmost professionalism."*

Another graduate in employment noted that they loved *"the small classes, how personable, kind, caring and approachable the professors were. It makes a difference knowing they care."*

Similarly, another student noted three key strengths:

*"The fact that the classes were small and interactive – made it easier to have discussions.*

*The lecturers always had time to help.*

*The wide range of modules that we studied – made it more enjoyable."*

Some former students signalled out particular modules and also valued the applied element of the assessments employed. For example...

*"I enjoyed the statistics and research methods as it had been made easy due to the teaching skills of the lecturers giving the classes and tutorials. I was never strong in mathematics and originally at the beginning of the course hadn't felt these topics would be for me but I end up really loving them. I liked how the programme was research based and had many theories or issues backed up by articles and text. The assignments were very applicable to real life scenarios and issues you can face which made it much easier to get through the work knowing its relevance and purpose. I liked the breakdown of most of the modules between exams and continuous assessment too."*

Another student noted that they:

*"...enjoyed the diverse ways of learning. For example, it wasn't just slides and note taking, there were different types of assessments such as going to a creche and observing how children learn for lifespan development, taking to the streets to study the topic of "eyewitness testimony" and interviewing people on their life story to learn about how experiences can shape a person. We also visited museums, workshops and had plenty of different guest lectures from different backgrounds and specialties.*

*Lastly, there were some lectures that were continuous assessment which helped me as I can get extremely stressed around exam time and I feel exams might not be a good way for me to show my true ability. I'm aware that it is not realistic to outdo with exams but the mix between exams and continuous assessment took a lot of stress away from me and other students."*

On this last point, it is interesting to note that some students in particular value the continuous assessment components of the course however other students (such as in the previous comment) valued the split of examinations and CAs.

### 5.2.3 Areas for improvement

Although when asked how the programme might be improved one graduate reported that there is “nothing” they would change, most of those contacted had some valuable suggestions.

One graduate from the first cohort of students on the programme, noted that at the time he undertook his studies:

*“there was a lack of a clear psychology lab (as it was often occupied by other modules), however the remote access to digital college facilities largely alleviated this. As my year was the initial cohort, most aspects improved over the duration of the course, and I would imagine it has continued to do so since.”*

It should be noted that in the academic year 2015/2016 we introduced the dedicated module *Psychology Labs* to ensure students had more opportunities to engage in practical experimental work. Unfortunately, the first cohort did not take this module at the time, however the introduction of this has significantly strengthened the programme.

Three students reported that some greater guidance could be placed on helping students with their future career path, for example one graduate noted that:

*“The only aspect I feel could be improved for this programme is to help new students to focus on their career choice from as early as possible within their degree. Information regarding what criteria you need to accomplish throughout your degree in order to ensure you can transition to the next stage of your career would be very useful to get student more decisive about how they shape their degree.”*

Similarly, another graduate stated:

*“There needed to be more of an emphasis on what people were planning on doing after the degree, such as work experience and workshops, on the different options people have and postgraduate courses.”*

Another graduate made explicit mention of the value of obtaining work experience:

*“A greater emphasis could potentially be placed upon work experience in the field of psychology during the course of the degree, as this can often be considered to be an imperative aspect of a future career in numerous areas, such as obtaining voluntary experience within the clinical field”*

Similarly, another student noted that

*“I think maybe some work experience as an option linked to the college would be nice as many employers in the field of psychology already require work experience. Other than this I feel as though the programme did what it intended to and has given me the drive to progress in the field confidently knowing a base of all modules touched on in the course”*

Based on this feedback, the programme team in conjunction with the careers office in NCI will consider strategies to provide learners on the programme with greater options and information on careers following their degree. For example, it is proposed that from 2017/2018 the careers office will now engage with the students at an earlier stage of their degree than was previously the case (stage two as opposed to stage three of the programme). In addition, students will now be more actively encouraged to seek volunteering opportunities at an earlier stage of the programme. As part of our

programme review strategy we are proposing a number of ways in which modules and assessment may become more applied, thereby further enhancing the range of transferable skills available to students.

Overall however, this feedback provides a strong endorsement on the quality of the programme and the teaching staff.

## 5.3 Employer feedback

### 5.3.1 Current employers of graduates

Our BA (Hons) Psychology aims to impart on students a wide range of transferable skills (see Section 5.4.3), thus enabling graduates to enter a range of different employment sectors. As part of our stakeholder feedback, two employers of former graduates were consulted to establish if their employees had developed the necessary transferable skills for their position. These employers were from two different sectors – retail management and youth care.

The employer of a graduate in retail management was very complementary, listing a number of positive attributes:

*“Her positive attitude and her can do approach to tasks, no matter the level of pressure involved in a task she always rises above it to stay positive and calm.*

*Her willingness and flexibility are second to none and a credit to her.*

*Her willingness to come up with ideas to improve the atmosphere and maintain a calm and positive working atmosphere are second to none.”*

A separate employer of a graduate working in youth care provided a clear description of her role and the skills required of this. This employer was similarly impressed with the high level of skills evident in the former student.

*“Graduate X is currently employed as a community support specialist with the Glynn County, Juvenile Court in Brunswick, Georgia. Graduate X works with at risk youth in our community by assisting them with resources and skills needed to avoid further involvement with the juvenile and adult court system. Graduate X monitors their progress and behaviour at home, school and in the community. Graduate X is also a trained facilitator in our evidence based groups, which are designed to help the youth we serve make better choices and decisions and avoid detention. Graduate X has excellent communication skills, which allows her develop a good working relationship with the youth and families she works with, her communications skills also allows her to effectively facilitate groups and have a good rapport with group participant’s.”*

Both employers valued the graduates’ communication skills, as well as their critical thinking skills, problem solving skills, leadership/teamwork skills, and their organisation and goal setting skills. Other highlighted skills included project management, creativity and presentation skills.

In addition to seeking feedback from current employers of graduates, we also contacted a range of other potential employers to ascertain if they felt the skills developed by the programme would be of value in their particular employment contexts. This feedback is outlined in more detail in section 5.5.2.

### 5.3.2 Supervisors of graduates

As graduates who intend to pursue a career in psychology must generally undertake further postgraduate training, the psychology team wished to get feedback on how graduates currently engaged in postgraduate research were faring. Specifically, the team wished to establish if the training students received on the programme adequately prepared them for this path. To this end, two

external supervisors of past students were consulted. Both these supervisors responded in writing and their letters are included in the Appendix 1b

To synthesise, both supervisors were extremely complementary of the students in question, and in particular their skills in psychological research methods. For example, Prof. Andrew Coogan, Head of Department in Psychology at Maynooth University noted that the NCI graduates he was currently co-supervising were “extremely capable”.

He also wrote that these students...

*“...have each demonstrated the capacity to independently conceptualise a project that is suitable for a PhD, and have undertaken all of the necessary steps required to carry out this work. It has been a very positive experience working with each of these students thus far, and I have been impressed by the level of understanding each candidate demonstrated regarding their chosen topic areas, and their level of knowledge regarding general methodological and statistical skills. It is a testament to the quality of the BA in Psychology degree at NCI that three graduates have been capable of achieving entry to the PhD programme in Maynooth University, and have adjusted to the demands of research, and teaching (in their roles as demonstrators), so comfortably.*

Similarly, Prof. Mark Shevlin, who is the PhD supervisor of another NCI graduate, was very complementary of the skills this student posed. He noted that he:

*“...has been an exceptional student throughout that time demonstrating a capacity for individual work and self-directedness; critical qualities for a PhD student. I was extremely impressed by the level of knowledge, and statistical/methodological training that Steven possessed as he began his PhD research.”*

Furthermore, Prof. Shevlin acknowledged the great achievement that this student had in receiving a scholarship for his PhD “as a consequence of his impressive proposal and interview”. He observed that

*“It is unusual for a student to receive a scholarship immediately following the completing of his undergraduate degree, however I believe this speaks to the high quality of the education and training that he received during his time at NCI”.*

## **5.4 Staff feedback**

The psychology lecturing team hold regular meetings throughout the course of every academic year in order to reflect on all aspects of the programme delivery. In these meetings (typically around 5 each year), issues relating to student engagement, assessment and supervision, among others, are discussed.

As part of the programme review process a more systematic appraisal of the programme was taken during a series of meetings. All lecturing staff were asked to reflect upon the positives and challenges of the programme, as well as potential opportunities for development.

While generally the team were positive in respect to the delivery of the programme, a few issues were discussed in relation to assessment strategy and learner workload, as well as potential new directions for the programme. Some of these issues are highlighted below:

### **5.4.1 Engagement, performance, and progression**

As discussed earlier in the document, a common concern for the psychology team lies with a small number of students who tend to disengage from the programme, as evidenced through lack of attendance or non-completion of assessments. Potential strategies for increasing engagement among this group are often discussed, including how best to encourage ongoing participation in class as part



of assessment strategies and the provision of supports. Taken in conjunction with the findings of the student survey, it would appear that not all students are aware of the supports available to them, so a greater transparency of these services might be one means in which engagement could be further increased.

Perhaps not unique to the psychology programme is the fact that some enrolled students come into difficulty, either academically or personally, throughout the course of their studies. A few students on the programme suffer from mental health difficulties and it is these students who are often at risk of disengaging. Indeed, it is possible that psychology as a discipline area may attract a higher proportion of students who are at risk of such issues than in other programmes, however it is acknowledged that this observation is based on a relatively small sample. At programme team meetings, much time is spent discussing how best to support these students. While the college does have a counsellor that is available to all students, it is also acknowledged that the needs of this particular category can require a higher level of professional support than that which can be offered within the confines of the institution.

Notwithstanding concerns for such isolated cases, progression rates among the students are generally strong with only a small proportion of attrition each year. One observation that the team has made however is that failure rates are slightly elevated in second year when compared to failure rates in first or third year (as can be evidenced by the statistics presented in section 3.) This may be partly attributed to the combination of modules that students take in second year as well as the increased demand that comes with the stage. For example, students must take *Applied Statistics* which rests on the previously foundational knowledge of *Introduction to Statistics*. By its nature the second year statistics module is more complex in its scope and requirements which may result in a higher failure rate. Furthermore, the module *Biological Basis of Behaviour* entails much technical content which students may struggle with. Also, within the second semester of second year there may be a further increase in assessment burden given that students must take two 100% CA modules (*Psychology Labs* and *Coaching Psychology*) in addition to two modules with an examination component. As part of the review process the team spent much time reflecting on the sequencing of modules in second year however, as can be seen below, we concluded that this combination holds the most logical structure and should remain in order to meet PSI requirements. In any event, there is still an average end of session pass rate of 79% which implies the vast majority cope well with the particular subset of modules. As part of the review process however, we have taken steps to minimise assessment burden, which should impact positively on future progression rates.

#### 5.4.2 Module scope and content

In considering whether any changes should be made to the structure of the programme and its module offerings, the team reflected firstly on the programme on a global level (e.g. regarding what modules should be retained and how they are integrated into the programme as a whole) before engaging in a more focused local reflection regarding any required changes to teaching, learning and assessment strategies of specific modules.

It was first acknowledged that, due to PSI requirements, most of the modules should remain, given that they are core pillars of the discipline. These include most of the modules in the first and second year of the programme (e.g. *Social Psychology*, *Lifespan Development*, *Cognitive Psychology*, *Biological Basis of Behaviour*, *Personality and Individual Differences*) as well as all the statistics and research based modules. While not specifically listed as PSI core modules, the team also decided that the subjects *Psychology of Learning and Behaviour Analysis* and *Coaching Psychology* be retained in second year. Behaviour Analysis is a key division with PSI and is a growing field, and *Coaching Psychology*, while also representing a growing field, is a unique module on the programme in the sense that it involves a highly practical and group-based component.

As part of the review process, the staff undertook a comprehensive analysis of the range of offerings of other psychology providers in the country (this process is detailed more in section 5.5.4). One observation from this analysis was that all programmes involve some elective structure, thereby allowing students to sample a greater range of subjects from psychology. The team agreed that the programme review offered a good opportunity to integrate an elective structure into the programme. While some programmes allow students to select from a number of non-psychology modules, it was decided to focus on modules within the discipline in line with the core objectives of the programme.

In considering which modules should be introduced as new electives, the team considered existing psychology programmes, as well as growing fields within the discipline (see 7.1.3). Through this process, the team identified *Health Psychology* in particular as an emerging dominant field of study within psychology. In order to introduce new modules such as this, a decision had to be made regarding which modules would move from core on the existing programme to electives on the proposed programme. To this end, the team spent some time examining the structure of stage 3 of the programme. It was decided to retain *Abnormal Psychology* as a core module along with the newly proposed *Health Psychology* and move the other modules into a 5-credit elective structure. This newly proposed structure involves the same amount of workload and contact hours as stage 3 of the current programme (i.e. students take one 10 credit and two 5 credit modules each semester alongside their final year project), the only difference now being that students have some opportunity to specialise in their chosen modules. In addition to a range of advanced psychological modules, students may also choose to select electives outside the discipline, in the area of business and management. Further details of these changes is provided in section 7.

The team also considered assessment strategies as part of their analysis. Generally, it was agreed that students were exposed to a range of diverse assessments that adequately addressed the MLOs (see earlier Section 3.7) however the view was taken that students may be unnecessarily overburdened with assessments and examinations. This has influenced the decision to change certain aspects of the assessment in the context of the programme review. Details of these changes and their rationale are included in section 7 of the document.

### 5.4.3 Transferable skills

A core objective of the programme is that graduates leave with a number of diverse transferable skills which will be valuable in a variety of different contexts and employment settings. As part of the programme review the programme team identified those skills which are most central to the programme. A brief summary of these skills is presented in the table below, along with an explanation of what these skills involve. Separately in the programme validation document we provide some concrete examples of how and where these skills are developed through the teaching, learning and assessment strategies in the newly proposed programme. It is intended to clearly articulate these skills to students both in the programme handbook and within the individual module descriptors where appropriate.

**Table 29: Transferable skills developed in the BA (Hons) Psychology Programme**

| Skill             | Explanation                                                                                                                                             |
|-------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Communication     | Ability to be an effective listener, to communicate effectively orally through discussions and presentations, to communicate clearly in written format. |
| Critical Thinking | Ability to critically engage with material and to critically interpret and synthesise information                                                       |



|                                                     |                                                                                                                            |
|-----------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Scientific Literacy and Statistical Analysis</b> | Ability to interpret and proficiently engage with scientific data, experimental design, and statistical analysis.          |
| <b>Flexibility</b>                                  | Ability to be innovative and creative in thinking, willing to explore alternative approaches                               |
| <b>ICT</b>                                          | Ability to use ICT skills to manipulate textual, numerical, and graphical information                                      |
| <b>Problem solving</b>                              | Ability to develop, implement and manage empirical projects effectively and efficiently                                    |
| <b>Project Management</b>                           | Ability to develop, implement and manage empirical projects effectively and efficiently                                    |
| <b>Self-Management</b>                              | Ability to manage own learning and performance through goal setting, prioritisation, time management and stress management |
| <b>Team Work and Leadership</b>                     | Ability to work as part of a group with strong intrapersonal skills and leadership skills.                                 |

## 5.5 External consultations

### 5.5.1 External examiners

As can be seen from the earlier section 3.5 and the external examiner reports contained in the Appendix 1a, both examiners have been largely very positive on the delivery of the programme, the marks and standards applied, and the diversity of assessment techniques employed. Where suggestions have been made for improving the programme, the team have taken this information on board.

In addition, the current external examiner was consulted regarding proposed changes to the programme (see below). He was largely positive and in agreement with this however did have a number of suggestions.

### 5.5.2 Potential employers of graduates

In addition to seeking feedback from current employers and supervisors of graduates (Section 5.3), a number of potential employers were contacted to get their views on whether they would employ graduates of the psychology programme.

Specifically, employers in the following companies/sectors were consulted:

- Employer from a Large International Technology company
- Employer from an Education Start-Up
- Employer from *Phonewatch*, a security company
- Employer from the Civil Service
- Employer from the leisure industry, specifically Ireland's largest Golf Club
- Employer from *Investwise*, a financial services company in the IFSC

In order to garner this feedback, we presented the above employers with a brief description of the psychology programme as well as the identified list of transferable skills developed by students over the course of the programme. These skills were previously outlined in section 5.4.3.

Feedback from all the employers contacted was positive, with all indicating that they would employ graduates of the programme who exhibited the aforementioned skills. As expected, the skills that were most highly valued varied with the particular sector consulted. For example, the employer from the large tech company noted that the most highly valued skills would be Scientific Literacy and Statistical Analysis, followed by Self-Management, Problem Solving, and ICT skills. Similarly, the employer in *Investwise* valued Statistical Analysis, Problem Solving, and Self-Management. In contrast, an employer in the civil service highlighted Problem Solving as the most valuable skill, while an employer in an Education Start-up most valued the skills of Communication and Critical Thinking. The employer from Phonewatch also highlighted Communication as very important “...specifically within teams and departments and the ability to communicate up as well as sideways and down”. This also ties in with the additional skills of Team Work and Leadership as also developed through assignments on the programme. Within the leisure industry, this employer also valued Communication skills alongside Project Management.

When asked whether any other skills would be valued in employees, the employer in the large tech company stated the following:

*“Initiative to constantly innovate, particularly around technology – the ability to use a technical literacy of current technologies to most effectively leverage domain specific knowledge, in this case psychology. Technology is providing a huge number of ways to more effectively store, analyse and present data. Keeping up with the development of these technologies, and understanding how to most effectively leverage these is crucial”*

Given this particular sector, it is not surprising that innovation regarding technology is highly valued. It is notable that this employer also rated the skills of scientific literacy and statistical analysis as the most valuable on our programme, which is clear evidence of the potential for psychology graduates to pursue employment opportunities in fields such as this.

The employer in the education start-up also valued the skill of Logic, noting that

*“...it was once a staple of all classical educations, but now only really seen in computer science/engineering or philosophy courses. Very valuable interdisciplinary skill as it greatly aids with objective analysis and deductive reasoning.”*

While logic is not explicitly listed within our matrix, we would argue that this is indirectly developed through related skills such as analysis, critical thinking and problem solving. However, this feedback is valuable in the context of the current programme review and suggests that further development of logical analysis could be fostered and highlighted within the programme.

The employer from Phonewatch also listed Adaptability as a key skill, noting that...

*“I can’t count the number of people I’ve heard say in varying ways “that’s not my job”. One of the things that I could identify as setting aside our top performers (not in results necessarily as we’re in sales) but in terms of progression and leadership is the willingness to take on tasks that may be outside their skillset or comfort zone when necessary. “*

The ability to be adaptable is also fostered through the transferable skill of flexibility and creativity which also requires graduates to be able to adapt their knowledge and abilities in a range of contexts.

Taken together this feedback illustrates that the diversity of skills developed by graduates over the course of the programme have much value in various employment contexts and further supports the programme rationale, structure and assessment methods.

### **5.5.3 Psychological Society of Ireland**

As our professional body, the programme team maintain regular contact with the PSI in order ensure that the professional guidelines for accreditation are met. Because there are a number of specific requirements in terms of subject coverage from PSI, the programme structure will not change

significantly through programme review. Should significant changes occur, PSI are consulted and updated.

As part of the programme review process, some members of the team and the president of NCI, Gina Quinn, met with the CEO of PSI, Ms. Terri Morrissey to discuss the current scope of the psychology programme in addition to the future plans for this. Ms. Morrissey was very positive regarding this structure and the initiatives being piloted in NCI. She emphasised that students should all join the society as student members which is something the team will continue to encourage.

#### **5.5.4 Other Psychology Providers**

As part of the review process, the team conducted a comprehensive analysis of all other providers of Level 8 psychology programmes in the country. This process significantly influenced the team's decision to propose the introduction of an elective system into the programme. As can be seen, all providers offer some elective system. In addition, there is support for the introduction of the newly proposed modules (e.g. *Health Psychology, Neuroscience, Evolutionary and Cross-cultural Psychology, Educational Psychology*), given that these are widely offered elsewhere.

**Table 30: Comparison of Module Content of other Level 8 Psychology Programmes in Ireland**

| Subject                             | National College of Ireland – Proposed modules                      | University College Dublin (UCD)                                                                             | Dublin City University (DCU)                                                                             | Dublin Business School (DBS)                                                                | Dun Laoghaire Institute of Design and Technology (IADT) | Trinity College Dublin (TCD)                                                                                                     | Maynooth University                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | University College Cork (UCC)                                                                                                                                                                                                          | University of Limerick (UL)                                                                                                                     | NUI Galway                                                                                                                                                                | Mary Immaculate College                                                        |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Introductory/ history module</b> | Applied introduction and history of psychology (10) – stage 1; core | Foundations of Psychology (5) – stage 2; core                                                               | Introduction to Psychology<br>Theoretical Issues & Approaches in Psychology (5) - stage 4; core          | Psychological Foundations – stage 1 (core)                                                  | Into to psychology – stage 1 (core)                     | Foundations of Psychological Thought Application (5) – stage 1; core<br><br>Theoretical Issues in Psychology (5) – stage 4; core | Introduction to psychology 1: Research foundations of psychology, biological and developmental psychology (7.5 credits) – stage 1; core<br><br>Introduction to psychology II: Social psychology, cognitive psychology and individual differences (7.5 credits) – stage 1; core | Introduction to Biological and Cognitive Perspectives on Psychology (5) – stage 1; core<br><br>Introduction to Developmental and Social Psychology (5) – stage 1; core<br><br>History and Philosophy of Psychology (5) – stage 2; core | Psychology Theory & Method I (5) – stage 1; core<br><br>Psychology Theory & Method II (5) – stage 1; core                                       | Introduction to psych I (5) – stage 1; core<br><br>Introduction to psych II (5) – stage 1; core<br><br>Historical and conceptual issues in psychology (5) – stage 3; core | Introduction to psychology – stage 1; core                                     |
| <b>Social psychology</b>            | Social psychology (10) – stage 1; core                              | Introduction to Social Psychology (5) – stage 1; core<br><br>Advanced Social Psychology (5) – stage 3; core | Social Psychology (5) – stage 1; core<br><br>Social Psychology & Contemporary Issues (5) - stage 4; core | Foundations in Social Psychology – stage 1 (core)<br><br>Social Psychology – stage 2 (core) | Social psychology – stage 3 (core)                      | Social psychology (5) – stage 1; core                                                                                            | Social psychology; conceptual and applied issues (5) - stage 3; core                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Social Psychology (5) – stage 2; core<br><br>Varieties of Contemporary Belonging: An Approach to Identity and Participation (5) – stage 3; elec.                                                                                       | Social Psychology (5) – stage 2; core<br><br>Social Psychology II (5) – stage 2; core<br><br>Approaches to Social Identity (5) - stage 4; elec. | Social psychology (5) – stage 2; core                                                                                                                                     | Social psychology 1 – stage 1; core<br><br>Social psychology 2 – stage 4; core |

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| <b>Cognitive psychology</b>                  | Cognitive psychology (10) – stage 1; core<br><br>Psychology of thinking (5) – stage 3; elective | Introduction to the Psychology of Perception and Cognition (5) – stage 1; core<br><br>Psychology of Language and Language Acquisition (5) – stage 2; core<br><br>Visual and Social cognition* (5) – stage 2; core<br>Advanced Cognitive Psychology (5) – stage 3; elec.<br><br>Advanced Language Development and Bilingualism (5) – stage 3; elec. | Cognitive Psychology (5) – stage 1; core<br><br>Perception (5) – stage 1; core<br><br>Advanced Cognitive Psychology (5) – stage 3; core | Fundamentals of Cognitive Psychology – stage 1 (core)<br><br>Modelling Cognitive Systems – stage 2 (core) | Cognitive psychology - - stage 2 (core)<br><br>Perception - - stage 2 (core)                                 | Thinking (5) – stage 1; core<br><br>Rationality and Reasoning – stage 3/4; elec.<br><br>Creativity and Imagination – stage 3/4; elec. | Perception and memory (10) – stage 2; core<br><br>Thought, language and social cognition (10) – stage 2; core<br><br>Spatial navigation and memory (3.3) – stage 3; elec.<br><br>Language (3.3) – stage 3; elec. | Applied Cognitive Psychology (5) – stage 3; elec.<br><br>Cognition and Real Life Applications (5) – stage 3; elec. | Cognition (5) – stage 2; core                                                            | Perception, attention & performance (5) – stage 2; core<br><br>Memory and cognition (5) – stage 2; core<br><br>Relational Frame Theory, Language & Cognition (5) – stage 3; elec | Cognitive psychology 1 – stage 2; core<br><br>Cognitive psychology 2 – stage 4; core                                           |
| <b>Developmental and lifespan psychology</b> | Lifespan development (10) - stage 1; core<br><br>Advanced developmental psychology              | Child & Adolescent Development (5) – stage 2; core<br><br>Lifespan Developmental Psychology                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Child Development (5) – stage 1; core<br><br>Lifespan Development: Adulthood (5) – stage 3; core                                        | Developmental Psychology – stage 1 (core)<br><br>Development across the lifespan: Adolescence &           | Developmental and lifespan psychology - stage 2 (core)<br><br>Educational Psychology (5) – stage 3; elective | Developmental Psychology - stage 2; core<br><br>Child Development in Changing Family Contexts –                                       | Learning, language & development (10)* - stage 2; core<br><br>Developmental psychology: theoretical & applied                                                                                                    | Developmental Psychology (5) – stage 2; core<br><br>The Psychology of Aging (5) – stage 2; core                    | Human Development and life span (5) – stage 2; core<br><br>Developmental Psychopathology | Developmental psychology (5) – stage 2; core<br><br>Applied Development Psychology                                                                                               | Developmental psychology 1 – stage 2; core<br><br>Developmental psychology 1 – stage 4; core<br><br>Educational psychology - - |

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|                                      | (5) – stage 3; elective<br><br>Educational psychology (5) – stage 3; elective                               | (5) – stage 3; core                                                                                                                                                         | Psychology II: Psychology of Adolescence (5) – stage 4; elec.<br><br>Educational Psychology (5) – stage 2; core                                                                                                                           | Adulthood – stage 2 (core)                                                                                                                          |                                  | stage 3/4; elec.<br><br>Applied Issues in Developmental Psychology – stage 3/4; elec.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | perspectives (5) – stage 3; core<br><br>Healthy ageing (3.3) – stage 3; elec.                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Applied Developmental Psychology (5) – stage 3; elec.<br><br>Special Educational Needs: Aetiology, Assessment and Intervention (5) – stage 3; elec.                                                                                                                                                                                 | gy (5) - stage 4; elec.                           | (5) – stage 3; elec.                                                                                                                                   | stage 3/4; elec.                              |
| <b>Biological basis of behaviour</b> | Biological basis of behaviour (10) - stage 2; core<br><br>Contemporary Neuroscience (5) – stage 3; elective | Brain and Behaviour (5) – stage 1; core<br><br>Behavioural Neuroscience (5) – stage 3; core<br><br>*module assigned to cognitive psychology also entails biological content | Biological Psychology 1 (5) – stage 1; core<br><br>Biological Psychology 2 (5) – stage 2; core<br><br>Psychopharmacology (5) – stage 3/4; elec.<br><br>Law & Neuroscience (5) – stage 3; elec.<br><br>Neuropsychology (5) - stage 4; core | Foundations of Biopsychology – stage 1 (core)<br><br>Fundamentals of Biopsychology – stage 2 (core)<br><br>Neuropsychopharmacology – stage 3 (core) | Neuropsychology – stage 3 (core) | Fundamentals of Neuroscience and Behaviour (5) – stage 1; core<br><br>The Neuropsychology of Control – stage 3/4; elec.<br><br>Social Neuroscience – stage 3/4; elec.<br><br>Preclinical and Clinical Models of Neuropsychiatric and Neurological disorders – stage 3/4; elec.<br><br>The Brain Through the Lifetime (5) – | Biological basis of behaviour (10) - stage 2; core<br><br>Classic studies in cognitive neuroscience (3.3) – stage 3; elec.<br><br>The mirror neuron system (3.3) – stage 3; elec.<br><br>The normal and abnormal brain (3.3) – stage 3; elec.<br><br>Sleep and circadian rhythms (3.3) – stage 3; elec. | Biological Bases of Behaviour (5) – stage 2; core<br><br>Introduction to Neuroscience, Perception and Attention (5) – stage 2; core<br><br>Behavioural and Cognitive Neuroscience (5) – stage 3; elec.<br><br>Medical Imaging and Biomedical Devices in the Neurosciences<br><br>Applied Biological Psychology (5) – stage 3; elec. | Biological basis of behaviour (5) – stage 2; core | Biological psychology (5) – core; stage 2<br><br>Issues in Cognitive Neuroscience (5) – core; stage 3<br><br>Behavioural Medicine (5) – stage 3; elec. | Biological basis of behaviour – stage 3; core |

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|                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | stage 3/4;<br>elec.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Personality and individual differences</b> | Personality and individual differences (10) - stage 2; core                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Human Intelligence and Personality (5) – stage 3; core                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Personality Psychology (5) – stage 2; core<br><br>Psychological Measurement & Assessment (5) – stage 2; core                                                                                                                                 | Personality & Psychoanalytic Subjectivity – stage 2 (core)                                                                                                                 | Personality and individual differences – stage one; core                                                                                                                                                                              | Personality and Individual Differences (5) – stage 1; core<br><br>Advanced Individual Differences – stage 3/4; elec.                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Personality and intelligence (10) - stage 2; core                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Individual Differences (5) – stage 2; core<br><br>Psychological Measurement (5) – stage 3; elec.                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Psychology of Personality (5) – stage 2; core                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Theories of personality (5) – core; stage 2                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Personality and individual differences – stage 2; core                                                                                                             |
| <b>Research methods and statistics</b>        | <p>Introduction to Research Methods (10) – stage 1; core</p> <p>Introduction to Statistics (10) – stage 1; core</p> <p>Applied Statistics (10) – stage 1; core</p> <p>Applied Research Methods (5) – stage 2; core</p> <p>Psychology labs (2) – stage 2; core</p> | <p>Research Methods &amp; Stats I (5) – stage 1; core</p> <p>Laboratory Practicals in Psychology I (5) – stage 2; core</p> <p>Research Methods &amp; Stats II (5) – stage 2; core</p> <p>Laboratory Practicals in Psychology II (5) – stage 2; core</p> <p>Research Methods &amp; Stats III (5) – stage 3; core</p> | <p>Psychology Research Skills 1 (10) – stage 1; core</p> <p>Psychology Research Skills 2 (10) – stage 2; core</p> <p>Psychology Research Skills 3 (5) – stage 3; core</p> <p>Programming for Experimental Psychology (5) – stage 3; core</p> | <p>Data Analysis and Computing – stage 1 (core)</p> <p>Psychological Research Methods – stage 2 (core)</p> <p>Quantitative &amp; Qualitative Analysis – stage 2 (core)</p> | <p>Research methods and statistics 1 – stage 1 (core)</p> <p>Research methods and statistics 2 – stage 2 (core)</p> <p>Research methods and statistics 3 – stage 3 (core)</p> <p>Advanced research in psychology – stage 4 (core)</p> | <p>Research Skills and Methodology (10) – stage 1; core</p> <p>Statistics and Methodology I (10) – stage 1; core</p> <p>Statistics and Methodology II -stage 2; core</p> <p>Research Skills and Methodology II -stage 2; core</p> <p>Research-stage 3; core</p> <p>Practicals, Methodology and Stats III - stage 3; core</p> | <p>Introduction to practical experimental psychology (7.5) – stage 1; core</p> <p>Intro to psychological research methods and analysis (7.5) – stage 1; core</p> <p>Statistical computing and methodological applications for psychology (10) – stage 2; core</p> | <p>Experimental Design and Statistical Application (5) – stage 1; core</p> <p>Research Methods in Psychology (10) – stage 1; core</p> <p>Psychology as Science (5) – stage 1; core</p> <p>Research Methods in Psychology II (15) – stage 2; core</p> <p>Advanced Research Methods (5) – stage 4; core</p> | <p>Practical Psychology I (5) – stage 1; core</p> <p>Practical Psychology II (5) – stage 1; core</p> <p>Empirical Psychology I (5) – stage 2; core</p> <p>Empirical Psychology II (5) – stage 2; core</p> <p>Advanced Research Methods (5) – stage 4; core</p> | <p>Introduction to Research Methods (5) – stage 1; core</p> <p>Research Methods in Psychology (5) – stage 2; core</p> <p>Experimental psychology workshop I (5) – stage 2; core</p> <p>Qualitative research methods (5) – stage 2; core</p> <p>Experimental psychology workshop II (5) – stage 2; core</p> <p>Advanced research methods in psychology (5) – stage 3; core</p> | <p>Research, design and methodology 1 – stage 2; core</p> <p>Research, design and methodology 2 – stage 3; core</p> <p>Ethical research design – stage 3; core</p> |

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|                                      |                                             |                                                                                                                |                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                |                                                        |                                                      |                         | Psychological measurement: theory and practice (5) – stage 3; core                                               |                                                         |
| <b>Others skills – based modules</b> | Coaching psychology (10) – stage 2; core    | Career development in psych (5) – stage 3; elec.                                                               | Critical Thinking (5) – stage 1; core<br>Working in Psychology (5) – stage 3; core. | Communications for Personal Success – stage 1 (core)<br><br>Learning to Learn – stage 1 (core)<br><br>Employability Skills / Innovation – stage 2 (core) |                                                                                  | Academic Skills Tutorials I (5) – stage 1; core<br><br>Personal and Career Development (5) – stage 2; core<br><br>Advanced Academic Skills (5) – stage 4; core |                                                        | Personal and Career Development (5) – stage 3; elec. |                         | Professional skills in psychology (5) – stage 2; core<br><br>Service Learning in Psychology (5) – stage 3; elec. |                                                         |
| <b>Project</b>                       | Final Project (20) – stage 3; core          | Psychology Research Project Skills (5) – stage 3; core<br><br>Psychology Research Project (15) – stage 3; core | Psychology Research Project (20) – stage 4; core                                    | Research Project – stage 3 (core)                                                                                                                        | IT group project – stage 3 (core)<br><br>Major research project – stage 4 (core) | Group Projects – stage 3; core<br><br>Project (20) – stage 4; core                                                                                             | Independent research project (20) – stage 3; core      | Practical Project Work (20) – stage 3; core          | Final year project (20) | Research project (15) – stage 3; core                                                                            | Undergraduate dissertation in psychology – stage 4 core |
| <b>Learning/behaviour analysis</b>   | Learning and behaviour (10) – stage 2; core |                                                                                                                | Experimental Behaviour Analysis (5) – stage 2; core                                 | Behaviour Science – stage 3 (core)                                                                                                                       |                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                | Introductory material in module learning, language and |                                                      |                         | Psychology of Learning (5) – stage 2; core<br><br>Applied Behaviour                                              | Applied behavioural analysis – stage 3/4; elec.         |



|                            |                                           |                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                              |                                     |                                               |                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                        |                                                                                             |                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                           |                                      |
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|                            |                                           |                                                                                                                                                                             | ABA Across the Lifespan (5) – stage 4; elec.                                                                                                                 |                                     |                                               |                                                                                                                                                         | development as included above<br><br>Applied Behaviour Analysis (3.3) – stage 3; elec. |                                                                                             |                                                       | Analysis (5) – stage 3; core<br><br>Paediatric Clinical Behavioural Interventions (5) – stage 3; elec.<br><br>Modelling Learning and Decision Making (5) – stage 3; elec. |                                      |
| <b>Health psychology</b>   | Health psychology (5; 10) – stage 3; core | Introduction to Disability Studies (5) – stage 2; elec.<br><br>Introduction to Health Psychology (5) – stage 2; elec.<br><br>Applied Health Psychology (5) – stage 3; elec. | Health Psychology (5) – stage 2; core<br><br>Society, Health & Illness (5) – stage 2; elec.<br><br>Psychology, Illness and Disability (5) – stage 3/4; elec. | Health Psychology stage 3 (elec.)   | Sport and health psychology – stage 2 (elec.) |                                                                                                                                                         | Health psychology (3.3) – stage 3; elec.                                               | Health Psychology: Models and Applications (5) – stage 3; elec.                             | Health Psychology (5) – stage 4; elec.                | Health psychology (5) – stage 3; core                                                                                                                                     | Health psychology – stage 3/4; elec. |
| <b>Abnormal psychology</b> | Abnormal psychology (10) – stage 3; core  | Clinical Psychology (5) – stage 2; elec.<br><br>Counselling Psychology (5) – stage 2; elec.                                                                                 | Abnormal Psychology (5) – stage 4; core                                                                                                                      | Abnormal Psychology stage 3 (elec.) | Abnormal psychology (10) stage 3; core        | Psychological Disorder (5) – stage 1; core<br><br>Clinical Psychology, Intellectual Disability and Pervasive Developmental Disorders – stage 3/4; elec. | Abnormal psychology (5) – stage 3; core                                                | Abnormal Psychology (5) – stage 3; core<br><br>Psychological Therapies (5) – stage 3; elec. | Abnormal and Clinical Psychology (5) – stage 4; elec. |                                                                                                                                                                           |                                      |

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|                                   |                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                   |                                           |                                                                                | Preclinical and Clinical Models of Neuropsychiatric and Neurological disorders – stage 3/4; elec. |                                               |                                              |                                         |  |                                                |
| Workplace psychology              | Workplace psychology (5) – stage 3; elective                       | Introduction to Work and Organisational Psychology (5) – stage 2; elec.<br>Practising organisational psychology: Diagnosing and solving workplace problems (5) – stage 3; elec. | Organisational Psychology (5) – stage 2; core<br>Applied Psychology and Work (5) – stage 4; elec. | Organisational Psychology stage 3 (elec.) | Organisational psychology – stage 2 (elec.).                                   |                                                                                                   |                                               | Work Psychology (5) – stage 3; elec.         |                                         |  | Organisational psychology - - stage 3/4; elec. |
| Evolutionary/ cultural psychology | Evolutionary and cross-cultural psychology (5) – stage 3; elective | Cross-Cultural Psychology (5) – stage 3; elec.                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                   |                                           |                                                                                | Evolutionary Psychology (5) – stage 1; core                                                       | Comparative Psychology (3.3) – stage 3; elec. | Evolutionary Psychology (5) – stage 3; elec. |                                         |  |                                                |
| Cyber-psychology                  | Cyber psychology (5) – stage 3; elective                           |                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                   |                                           | Cyber-psychology – stage 1 (core)<br>Psychology of new media and entertainment |                                                                                                   |                                               | People and Technology (5) – stage 3; elec.   | Sociology of Media (5) - stage 4; elec. |  |                                                |

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|                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                       | – stage 4 (elec.)                                                                                                                                                           |                                                         |                                                                                     |                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                           |
| Criminal psychology                          | Criminal psychology (5) – stage 3; elective                                                                                                                                                                   | Psychology and Crime (5) – stage 3; elec.                                                         | Crime & Psychology (5) – stage 4; elec.                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                       | Forensic psychology – stage 3 (elec.).                                                                                                                                      | The Psychology of Criminal Behaviour – stage 3/4; elec. |                                                                                     | Forensic Psychology (5) – stage 3; elec.                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                | Forensic psychology - stage 3/4; elec.                                                                                                                    |
| Generic applied modules                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Psychology for Everyday Life (5) – stage 2; elec.                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                         | Psychology in the 'Real' World (3.3) – stage 3; elec.                               | Psychology and Everyday Life (5) – stage 2; core.<br><br>Applying Psychology in Community Settings (5) – stage 3; elec. | Psychology and Everyday Life (5) – stage 1; core<br><br>Psychology and Social issues (5) – stage 1; core<br><br>Applied Psychology (5) – stage 4; core |                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                           |
| Other (includes some non-psychology modules) | Financial management tools for enterprise (5) – stage 3, elec<br><br>Organisational development (5) – stage 3, elec<br><br>Project management (5) – stage 3, elec<br><br>Entrepreneurship (5) – stage 3, elec | Philosophy of Mind (5) – stage 2; elec.<br><br>Sport and Exercise Psychology (5) – stage 3; elec. | Philosophy of Psychology (5) – stage 1; core<br><br>Sport Psychology (5) – stage 2; core<br><br>Intra (30) – stage 3; core<br><br>Psychology of Self Control<br><br>Psychoanalysis (5) – stage 4; elec.<br><br>Introduction to Marketing | Introduction to Psychoanalysis – stage 1 (core)<br><br>Employability in Action / Lifelong Learning – stage 3 (core)<br><br>Hysteria - stage 3 (elec.) | Information design – stage 2 (elec.)<br><br>Usability – stage 2 (elec.)<br><br>Multimedia – stage 2 (elec.)<br><br>Web applications and content management – stage 3 (elec) | Consumer Behaviour – stage 3/4; elec.                   | Conceptual, philosophical and professional issues in psychology (5) – stage 3; core | Positive Psychology (5) – stage 3; elec.                                                                                | Cooperative placement – all stage 3<br><br>Economic Psychology (5) - stage 4; elec.<br><br>Political Psychology (5) - stage 4; elec.                   | Introduction to Collaborative Enquiry and Applied Systems (5) – stage 3; elec. | Introduction to information technology – stage 2; core<br><br>Off campus programme – stage 3; core<br><br>Controversies in psychology -- stage 3/4; elec. |

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|                | <p>International HRM (5) – stage 3, elec</p> <p>Contemporary issues in reward management (5) – stage 3, elec</p> <p>Ethics and social responsibility (5) – stage 3, elec</p> <p>Public relations and social media (5) – stage 3, elec</p> |                                                                                                                           | <p>(5) – stage 2; elec.</p> <p>Intro to Anthropology (5) – stage 1; elec.</p> <p>Intro to Human Resource Management (5) – stage 2; elec</p> <p>Industrial Relations (5) – stage 2; elec</p> <p>Sexuality &amp; Society (5) – stage 2; elec</p> <p>Freedom and Health (5) – stage 2; elec.</p> | <p>Psychoanalysis &amp; Language stage 3 (elec.)</p> <p>Sexuality I stage 3 (elec.)</p> <p>Sexuality II stage 3 (elec.)</p> |                                                                                                                                   |                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                            |                                                                                                           |                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                       |
| Elective rules | Students chose two electives in both semester 1 and 2 of stage 3. Details are outlined in section 7                                                                                                                                       | Students chose electives in stage 2 and 3 and can also pick a limited number of modules from other schools in the college | Students chose one elective in stage one, two in stage 2, one in stage 3 and four in stage 4                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Electives are part of programme, although rules for selection are not publically available                                  | Students opt to enter either a psychology and practice path or a psychology and technology path which determines electives chosen | Students choose six electives in third year and five in fourth year | Students choose three electives each semester from two broad modules – totalling 10 credit each semester (i.e. each module approx. 3.3 credits) | Students have restrictions on the combinations of elective choices which are detailed on the NUIG website. | Electives are offered both semesters pending on resource requirements. Students choose two each semester. | Students chose electives in third year – there is a limited availability for electives offered. | Students chose 2 electives in third year and another 2 in fourth year. Those shown are only a sample list (obtained from MIC website) |

#### **5.5.4.1 Assessment strategies with other psychology providers**

In addition to reviewing the range of modules on offer in other psychology providers, the programme team also undertook an analysis of the typical assessment structures within these providers based on publically available information. This analysis revealed that the most common assessment structure was similar to the current strategy in the BA (Hons) Psychology at NCI, with modules in other programmes typically being assessed based on a combination of CA and examination work. Some examples of differing assessment strategies are highlighted below. While it is acknowledged that this analysis is not exhaustive (since many strategies are not made readily available), this does give a good overview of current practice in the higher education sector.

In Maynooth University, the majority of modules are assessed based on a 40% CA / 60% examination split which is similar to the strategy of the current Psychology programme. There are also a limited number of practical-based modules which do not involve an examination component. Some modules in the final stage of the programme are assessed with a greater emphasis on examinations (75% of overall marks).

In UCD, modules are also typically assessed based on a combination of CA and terminal examinations with the weighting attributed to examinations varying from 60%-70% of the module grade. Like the current Psychology programme, UCD also has a lab-based module which involves 100% continuous assessment.

NUI Galway employs a similar strategy to the above institutions with most modules assessed by a 40%/60%, or 30%/70% CA/examination split. There are other modules which are based solely on examinations or coursework with others such as statistics assessed based on a 50%/50% split.

Assessment strategies are more variable in DCU, with modules assessed via various weightings of CA and exams. In Dun Laoghaire, the majority are assessed via an even 50%/50% split.

In all cases assessment types vary from essays to practical sessions, presentations and case studies among others.

Taken together it would appear that, on balance, the majority of psychology providers place a greater emphasis on examinations over coursework, except in the case of more practically-based modules. While this mirrors the assessment strategy for the current programme, it is proposed to make some alternations to this in the context of programme review. As will be detailed later, a decision has been made to place a greater emphasis on continuous assessment, while retaining the examination component for some modules.

## 6 Analysis of the programme in light of findings

Following the above thorough appraisal of the programme, a number of key conclusions can be drawn from the information presented previously. We have considered the key requirements of the programme review as determined by QQI below.

### 6.1 Programme effectiveness

#### 6.1.1 Learner numbers

The analysis of student numbers presented in section 3.1 shows that, since its initial validation, the BA (Hons) Psychology programme has grown significantly over the past five years suggesting that it will continue to attract learners in the future. The number of student applications and standard of CAO points has risen each year since 2012/2013, with a notable increase in both applications and points occurring in 2014/2015 following PSI accreditation. This is testament to the quality of the programme in appealing to school-leavers. Furthermore, the newly launched part-time provision of the programme has been attracting mature learners who wish to return to education. While smaller than the full-time programme, this too has been receiving a healthy number of applications, with demand likely to increase further as it becomes more established.

#### 6.1.2 Attrition, progression and completion

While there has been some attrition from the programme, the number of withdrawals has been relatively small (see section 3.3). There are a small number of students who appear to have disengaged from the programme which could be due to a number of factors. Analysis of withdrawals reveals that the most common reasons for discontinuation from the programme are financial or personal reasons. It should be noted that the BA (Hons) is fully self-funded which may result in a greater amount of withdrawals of this nature. While many of the factors leading to withdrawal may be beyond the control of the college, the programme team will continue to monitor such students and consider strategies to increase engagement thereby minimising the likelihood of dropout. For example, our proposal to reduce assessment burden on students may have a positive impact on those who withdraw due to these reasons. There are also a range of support services available in the college which students can avail of, however there could possibly be a greater transparency for these services.

When excluding those students who have formally withdrawn from the programme, an analysis of academic performance reveals that the vast majority of students in a given stage progress successfully onto the next stage (see section 3.4). As with any other academic course of study, it is expected that there will always be a certain cohort of students that perform poorly in course work and/or examinations. As such, our progression statistics are similar to that of other undergraduate courses in the college, although may be slightly lower than psychology programmes in other HE institutions in Ireland. This can be attributed to the lower minimum standard of CAO points on entry to the course (e.g. 270 in 2016/2017) in comparison to the points required for other programmes (points were in excess of 500 in UCD, TCD and DCU for example). However often, when a student fails a particular stage, they reregister again for the same stage in the following academic year so not all are lost from the programme upon failure. In addition, our proposed changes to assessment strategy and the removal of the no pass-by-compensation rule will likely have positive impacts on this.

We have had only two cohorts graduate from the programme so far, so caution should be drawn when interpreting completion rates. These rates were slightly lower in the more recently graduated group of students (2015/2016) than in the first group to graduate (2014/2015), however analysis of this data revealed a number of possible reasons for this. When withdrawals and absent students were excluded,

completion rates increased considerably suggesting that the vast majority who engage in the programme successfully complete.

Analysis of award classifications for both cohorts reveals a normal distribution, with most students receiving a H22 or H21 award. This suggests that, on graduation, most students have successfully acquired the knowledge, skills, and competencies required of the psychology programme, and are thus well-placed to pursue further postgraduate study and/or a range of employment opportunities

### 6.1.3 Teaching, learning and assessment strategies

The programme incorporates a wide range of teaching, learning, and assessment strategies which have been well received by current learners, graduates and external examiners. A particular strength of the programme is the number of diverse assessment strategies that are employed across the various modules which include more traditional assignments such as essays and in-class tests, as well as more unique and innovative assessments, including group presentations, case-studies, clicker-participation, practical experimentation and lab report writing. A number of formative assessments are also imbedded into modules and include group-based discussions and exercises. The *Coaching Psychology* module also offers a unique assessment strategy which is entirely group-based and focused on core skills that complement the conceptual knowledge accrued throughout the programme. Analysis of academic performance across the various assessment types reveals that these are effective in assessing students' knowledge, skills, and competencies within psychology, with a good reliability observed across student performance in the disparate elements. The assessment strategies have been well received by the students, however, following a comprehensive review of the programme assessment strategy it was observed that students may be overburdened with assessment in some stages of the programme. It was also acknowledged that there were some inconsistencies in expectations of students (for example in terms of expected essay word counts, see earlier section 3.7.2). The team have taken the programme review process as an opportunity to re-appraise the assessment strategy of the programme and all modules. While we maintain that the majority of our assessments provide students with valuable learning opportunities that are crucial to the development of a range of transferable skills, a decision was taken to remove or modify some assessments as deemed appropriate. In addition, a decision was to attenuate the emphasis placed on terminal examinations (see later section 7.1.4).

Mirroring the diversity in assessment strategies employed, teaching strategies also vary considerably across the programme. These include lectures, practical sessions, and small-group tutorials. All the various techniques are intended to enable students to achieve a more diverse understanding of the discipline of psychology through active participation and engagement with the material. A particular emphasis is also placed on the development of psychological research and statistical analysis skills, a thread which runs throughout the programme. Furthermore, students gain extensive experience in experimental design and practical participation both in the dedicated labs module, and in other practical sessions across various modules. Given the positive feedback that has been received from students, staff and external examiners, it is intended to retain this flexible approach to module delivery with a continuing emphasis on the development of these core skills.

## 6.2 Learning outcomes achieved

As part of the review, the programme team systematically appraised the programme learning outcomes (PLOs) and the appropriateness of each module learning outcome (MLO) in meeting these. In the originally validated version of the programme, there were a total of 31 PLOs. While all were deemed to be sufficiently met by the various MLOs, the team felt that, in line with QQI guidelines, these might be more succinctly collapsed in line with the 8 criteria outlined in the Level 8 Generic

Award Standards. The programme team therefore has proposed a slight reworking of the original PLOs which is detailed in 7.1.1

In terms of the MLOs, the vast majority were deemed suitable for the modules in question and assessment strategies were deemed to appropriately meet them. There were some minor alterations in some cases which are outlined later 7.1.4.

In the accompanying programme validation document we include a more focused and detailed appraisal of how each proposed MLO meets the newly proposed PLOs.

### 6.3 Programmes fitness for purpose

The programme can be viewed as being fit-for-purpose given our consultation with numerous external bodies. In particular, our accreditation by PSI is testament to the quality of the programme. This ensures that graduates who meet the professional standard as determined by PSI can pursue further postgraduate education in psychology or various employment opportunities. In 2014, the programme underwent a full-review by the PSI accreditation panel which resulted in a 5-year accreditation (the maximum timeframe possible) with no conditions. The panel were impressed with the staff on the programme, the physical resources, and the teaching, learning and assessment strategies employed. They also met privately with students enrolled on the programme and were impressed with their feedback, enthusiasm and level of engagement.

More recently, a meeting with the CEO of PSI was positive in terms of the ongoing developments in the programme and possible means for future collaborations.

Furthermore, feedback from external supervisors and employers of past graduates has been very positive. The fact that a number of our past students are engaged in further education demonstrates that they developed the skills and competencies necessary to conduct research during the course of their study on the programme while it is also apparent that those in employment is evident of the range of previously mentioned transferable skills that they have developed. It can therefore be concluded that the programme is fit-for-purpose as students are equipped with a solid grounding in the discipline of psychology and leave with a range of transferable skills.

### 6.4 Response of programme to market requirements and educational developments

Psychology remains a very popular subject choice as evidenced from the CAO numbers released every year. Our programme fills a gap in the market by attracting learners who may not necessarily meet the entry level requirements for high-points psychology courses in other institutions, however NCI may be perceived as the most favourable option for a range of learners given the small campus, the central location, and the faculty profile. Separately, for more mature learners interested in returning to education, the part-time programme fulfils this need. The increase in applications to this programme is evidence of the growing interest in this field.

All staff on the psychology programme are actively involved in research activity and, as such, are abreast of current and contemporary developments in their particular field(s) of study. Regular attendance at academic and educational conferences ensures that the team are up-to-date with the discipline. Undertaking the programme review has enabled a more critical appraisal of current trends of research within psychology. It is for this reason that the team is proposing a new module in *Health Psychology* for example, a sub-discipline of psychology which is growing and continuing to maintain momentum. It is also apparent that this programme fosters the development of a range of transferable skills which would prove useful in a number of different employment contexts.



## 6.5 Feedback mechanisms

### 6.5.1 Mechanisms for providing feedback on programme

Students have many opportunities to provide feedback on the programme. Some of these mechanisms were outlined in section 5.1. For example, all students provide detailed feedback on individual modules each semester with lecturers actively encouraged to address any concerns. Class representatives also act as a means of providing general feedback on class issues with regular class reps meetings enabling students to meet with the programme directors, coordinators, and support services. While this has been deemed effective to date, the class reps system is currently being reviewed to develop clearer policies regarding how best to act of student feedback in a timely and efficient manner. Currently this is done on a case-by-case basis with the relevant stakeholder (e.g. library, IT, student support or academic staff) acting on feedback where necessary.

Students may also provide individual feedback through a number of forums such as to through the programme coordinator, programme director or individual lecturers. NCI also has a students' union which offers students the opportunity to raise issues any concerns. To date there have been no formal complaints lodged in relation to the psychology programme, although there are policies and procedures in place to assist the college and programme team in responding to a complaint should a situation such as this arise in the future.

### 6.5.2 Mechanisms for seeking feedback on assessments

A central aspect of the assessment strategy in the programme is to ensure that all students receive timely, detailed, and critical feedback on their work. While this has become increasingly more demanding as the numbers grow, the team continues to provide this feedback so that students are aware of their strengths and weaknesses in completing assignments. The results of our programme level survey reveal that students are largely happy with the manner in which this feedback is delivered.

In addition, students can request feedback on their written examinations. While very few have sought this feedback to date on the psychology programme, there is a formal process in place whereby an appointment can be made with the relevant marker after results have been released. In this case students have the opportunity to receive more information on the particular marking scheme applied and raise any concerns that they may have.

## 6.6 Physical resources

The current physical resources can be deemed suitable for the programme although it is likely that are demand for additional resources will increase as the programme grows. While most lectures and tutorials are held in classrooms or lecture theatres, any computer or practical-based sessions (e.g. involving statistics, research methods and/or experimental work) are accommodated in the psychology computer lab. In these cases, larger cohorts are broken down into smaller tutorial-style groups in line with the learning, teaching and assessment strategy.

There is also a dedicated psychophysiological laboratory although at present this can only accommodate approximately 7 students (this is used for Final Project work where necessary, and as part of the assessment strategy in *Biological Basis of Behaviour*). There are additional testing rooms which can be used to data collection for small-scale experiments.

The college recently acquired new eye-tracking and observation equipment which is shared between the psychology programme and the School of Computing in NCI. This is likely to facilitate further experimental work and provide greater opportunities for research activity in the college. Currently the team are investigating the possibility of acquiring further resources, such as an EEG machine, to

enhance the range of research activities that both students and staff can engage in. In sum it is anticipated that as the programme develops the range of resources and equipment will be expanded upon.

## **6.7 Links with external bodies**

Given that the programme is accredited by the external body the PSI, this is our most important partner in terms of the delivery of the programme. The PSI determines the subject matter that should be covered within a level 8 award in psychology, so this ensures that the programme keeps up-to-date with professional standards. Our accreditation in 2014 and more recent communications with PSI have strengthened this relationship.

In terms of links with the community, the programme has also collaborates with the Early Initiative Initiative (ELI) in module delivery (see section 2.5.2). The ELI is involved in many out-reach programmes within the community and students in the programme have had the opportunity to conduct early numeracy assessments with children in a range of local schools. Students are also actively encouraged to engage in volunteering with a number of opportunities mention in section 2.5.5

Given the nature of the discipline, a key aim of the programme is to prepare students for further postgraduate training. The recent collaborations with Maynooth University on a PhD programme demonstrate a recognition for the high calibre of work and research activity currently taking place within the school.

In addition, the programme team has established many links with potential employers of graduates as well as past employers, as previously detailed in Section 5.5.

## **6.8 Feedback from graduates and employers**

As was detailed in section 5, both graduates and employers have been very complementary on the programme. Graduates have reported having positive experiences as part of their programme and have praised the high level of training they have involved. Furthermore, the external supervisors and employers contacted have been very happy with the standard of the graduates employed. The programme team recognises however that a greater engagement could be fostered between both graduates and employers. Potential means in which this could be facilitated were highlighted in Section 3.4.3 and include, for example, the development of an NCI Alumni Association.

## **6.9 Research activity**

Staff teaching on the psychology programme are all actively engaged in research activity which spans a wide variety of domains within psychology. As previously mentioned, the research output of psychology staff is very high, with over 50 articles published in the last year alone, many in high impact journals. Many members of staff have also been successful in securing research funding and this remains a focus of the team for future development. Not only does this research activity benefit the profile of NCI, it enriches the students' experience on the programme as it ensures they are taught by staff who have well-documented expertise in their various domains.

A direct benefit of this expertise can be evidenced when students conduct their own research. A core component of the programme is the Final Project module in stage 3 where students must undertake a sustained piece of independent empirical research under supervision of a staff member. To date, students have completed a wide variety of interesting and diverse projects entailing both experimental and cross-sectional designs. A few examples of these projects from the 2015 and 2016

graduating class can be seen in the table below. All of these projects are publically available to view using the college's archiving system trap (trap.ncirl.ie)

**Table 31: Sample titles of research projects on the psychology programme to date**

| Project Title                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The Impact of Emotional Cues on Decision-Making and the Additional Influence of Stressful Situations.                                                                                             |
| Obsessive Compulsive Disorder: An Investigation into the Potential Factors that Influence Attitudes towards OCD.                                                                                  |
| Perceived stress, self-efficacy, optimism, and social support: A study of Irish law enforcement officers and college students.                                                                    |
| An exploration of the Role of Touch in a Therapeutic Setting.                                                                                                                                     |
| A comparative study of self-esteem, mental toughness and athletic identity in team and individual sports                                                                                          |
| Maximising abilities of individuals with intellectual disabilities: importance of parental self-efficacy.                                                                                         |
| Examining the Relationship between Trait Emotional Intelligence and Playstyles within an MMO.                                                                                                     |
| Recognition of emotions from facial expressions: the role of gender, age, personality, and empathy.                                                                                               |
| A Study Investigating the relationship between Psychological Distress and Loneliness and Living Alone in Older Adults                                                                             |
| The effects of a theatre environment and an amateur dramatic production on theatre patron's enjoyment.                                                                                            |
| A Study Investigating the Differences between Drag Racing Experts and Novices in Reaction and Anticipation times.                                                                                 |
| An Investigation into the Effects of Subjective Feelings of Physical Activity Enjoyment and the Objective Features of Physical Activity on Positive and Negative Mental Health.                   |
| The Effects of Associative, Phonological, Semantic, and Linguistic Properties of Words Upon Recall: An Experiment on Verbal Memory.                                                               |
| Perceived social support received from face to face support group for Irish Family Carers.                                                                                                        |
| Less Stress, Happiness, Cognitive Success: An investigation into sedative music and its ability to increase our attention within cognitive tasks.                                                 |
| An investigation into the influence of learning preferences and personality on visual and text-based learning.                                                                                    |
| The perceptions of social structures as a predictor to levels of job satisfaction, job burnout and general mental health in a traumatic working environment: A look at Dublin City Fire Fighters. |

## 6.10 Projections for next five years

Pending successful revalidation of the programme, the team intend to continue to employ a diverse range of teaching, learning and assessment techniques in order to benefit students on the programme. Over the next two years we will take in two new cohorts on the part-time psychology degree so it is expected that student numbers will continue to grow. New teaching staff will be recruited as required to meet the additional demand.

The team also intend to increase the suite of psychology programmes in NCI over the next few years. Currently an MSc programme in psychology is under development which likely be submitted for validation within the next two years. The programme team also intend to foster the existing collaborations with Maynooth University through the co-supervision of PhD students. In addition, collaborations with external employers will be fostered in conjunction with the career's office in NCI.

The programme will apply for re-accreditation from PSI prior to January 2019. In order to be successful the team will act to ensure that all guidelines are met. If approved, this accreditation will last until early 2024.

In the validation document, more detail is provided on projections regarding student numbers as well as intake and expenditure over the next five years.

## 6.11 Conclusion

### 6.11.1 Summary of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats

Overall, the current programme has a number of strengths including:

- A highly expert research active lecturing team
- A solid programme structure which covers all the core pillars of psychology
- Excellent training for students in research methods and statistical analysis
- A broad range of teaching, learning and assessment strategies
- Emphasis on practical experimental work and applications in psychology
- PSI accreditation secured until January 2019
- Good facilities and supports in place for students
- Positive feedback from students, graduates and external examiners

Potential weaknesses include:

- Some evidence of a small number of disengaged students
- A high assessment burden and over-emphasis on examinations in some stages of the programme
- A lack of attention paid to some important aspects of psychology such as Health Psychology
- No opportunity for students to specialise in their module choice.
- No progression opportunities for postgraduate education in psychology at NCI

While the last weakness is beyond the scope of the current programme review, the team are planning to launch a postgraduate programme, likely in the area of Developmental Psychology, within the next few years which may open up progression routes for students interested in staying in NCI. In terms of the programme delivery of the BA (Hons) degree, as was mentioned previously, one potential weakness of the current structure of the programme is that students are not exposed to the entire range of sub-disciplines within psychology. While the core pillars of psychology and some additional fields are covered at present, the team has identified a number of potential gaps in knowledge that may be filled by the provision of electives in the programme. This is the most fundamental change that the team is proposing (see section 7). As such, these weaknesses can also be perceived as opportunities. In the context of programme review the team have the opportunity to introduce an elective structure, which is common practice in other psychology programmes in the county. Furthermore, a new module in *Health Psychology* can be easily integrated into the programme. Additional ways to strengthen the programme include further enhancing support for learners on the programme and piloting means for enhancing engagement. We also have undertaken a comprehensive review of our assessment strategy in order to reduce assessment burden for students. The team wish to take a flexible approach in terms of responding to changing demands in the educational sector as well as taking into account the needs of students.

There are of course a number of threats to the future delivery of the programme, the most obvious being that the programme will fail to achieve re-accreditation from PSI in January 2019. Having reviewed the guidelines, the programme team is confident that these will be met however it is important that PSI requirements are kept in mind as the programme continues to evolve.

### **6.11.2 Continued provision of programme**

Given all the information presented above, the team has concluded that the programme is still effective in its aims and objectives, thereby making a strong case for its continued provision with little change to its existing structure. We are however proposing a few minor changes to further enhance the programme. These are summarised in the section below.

## 7 Revision of the programme and action plan

As the programme is running well, with positive feedback from lecturers, students and graduates, we do not propose to dramatically change its overall structure in the current programme review. The programme has undergone some changes since validation, the most recent being in 2015/2016, and since these changes have been integrated (e.g. through the provision of more practical-based and advanced modules in psychology), the programme team have viewed these changes to have strengthened the programme delivery. Additionally, since our continued PSI accreditation requires that a certain amount of subject areas is covered, it is necessary that coverage of these core modules is retained, therefore most of the subject-coverage is immutable.

Thus, as we seek revalidation for the coming year, rather than significantly altering the structure and content of the programme, we are instead proposing some minor changes which are ultimately aimed at enhancing the range of areas that students are exposed to. The majority of these changes occur in the final year of the programme, whereby students will already have achieved a core grounding within the field of psychology.

In proposing these changes, we have engaged in multiple consultations with stakeholders and have carefully considered the range of offerings from other psychology programmes.

A summary of these changes and their rationale is provided below:

### 7.1 Modifications to be made in light of analysis

#### 7.1.1 Condensing of Programme Learning Outcomes (PLOs)

The team felt that the PLOs outlined in the originally validated programme could be more succinctly condensed into a total of eight PLOs, one for each of the QQI Level-8 Generic Award Standards. These also were developed to meet the overall objectives of the programme. Each PLO is listed in the table below alongside the corresponding award standard:

**Table 32: Newly proposed PLOs in relation to Level 8 Generic Award Standards**

| Level 8 expected learning outcomes (Generic Award Standards)                                                                                                                                        | Programme Learning Outcomes for the BA (Hons) Psychology degree                                                                           |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| An understanding of the theory, concepts and methods pertaining to a field (or fields) of learning                                                                                                  | Demonstrate an understanding of the core theories, concepts and methods which underpin the discipline of psychology.                      |
| Detailed knowledge and understanding in one or more specialised areas, some of it at the current boundaries of the field(s)                                                                         | Communicate a comprehensive knowledge of diverse theories and research findings across a range of psychological subjects and specialisms. |
| Demonstrate mastery of a complex and specialised area of skills and tools; use and modify advanced skills and tools to conduct closely guided research, professional or advanced technical activity | Demonstrate mastery in psychological research skills including systematic research design and statistical analysis.                       |
| Exercise appropriate judgement in a number of complex planning, design, technical and/ or management functions related to products, services, operations or processes, including resourcing         | Evaluate theoretical and empirical work in order to formulate judgements and draw conclusions in various domains in psychology.           |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                  |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Use advanced skills to conduct research, or advanced technical or professional activity, accepting accountability for all related decision making; transfer and apply diagnostic and creative skills in a range of contexts | Apply relevant professional and ethical standards in the planning, execution and dissemination of research.                                      |
| Act effectively under guidance in a peer relationship with qualified practitioners; lead multiple, complex and heterogeneous groups                                                                                         | Demonstrate an ability to work effectively in a team environment and take accountability for decisions.                                          |
| Learn to act in variable and unfamiliar learning contexts; learn to manage learning tasks independently, professionally and ethically                                                                                       | Exercise personal responsibility in adapting knowledge and skills acquired to address novel research questions and problems in varying contexts. |
| Express a comprehensive, internalised, personal world view manifesting solidarity with others                                                                                                                               | Articulate the role that psychology plays in a range of applied and interdisciplinary settings.                                                  |

All modules on the programme, both newly proposed and pre-existing modules, have now been integrated into this framework. In the validation document we have outlined in more detail how all these PLOs are met by the MLOs in the programme, as well as a systematic comparison of these PLOs to that of other psychology programmes in Ireland.

### 7.1.2 A newly proposed core module in Health Psychology

Based on the recent growth of the field of health psychology both in Ireland and internationally, the programme team propose to introduce this as a new module within the third year of the BA (Hons) degree. Health psychology is defined by the BPS as the application of psychological knowledge, research, and interventions to promote and improve health and the healthcare system, and to inform health policy. In any demographic, the delivery of scalable health interventions to optimise health and wellbeing is a priority, and psychology graduates with training in health psychology can contribute meaningfully to many different areas of research, policy, and practice.

Postgraduate training in Health Psychology is offered at NUI Galway, and can lead graduates towards working in research, in hospitals, private practice, local authorities, communities, and schools and other organisations, in an attempt to help individuals lead healthy lives. The Republic of Ireland is still developing expertise and growth within the field of health psychology and to date has achieved growth by basing its development on that seen in the UK's Division of Health Psychology. In an Irish context, the field of health psychology is growing considerably and 2016 saw the 13th annual conference of the Division of Health Psychology (established in 2003) nationally, having grown to include over 100 delegates and attracting high-quality international guests and keynotes. It is the stated aim of the DHP of Ireland to further develop professional training and recognition of health psychology in Ireland. Providing NCI students with a grounding in Health Psychology, as is offered in six other institutions nationally (see section 5.4.4) is therefore deemed an important aim of our new programme.

In the institutions in which Health Psychology is offered as a core module, this is reflective of the research expertise of the academics present, and postgraduate opportunities offered by the institutions. A number of current lecturers in the psychology programme in NCI have research expertise within health psychology meaning that there would be adequate resources to deliver this module. Ireland is becoming internationally regarded for its strength in Health Psychology research,



and the European Health Psychology Society has had its annual conference in Ireland twice in the past 20 years. The opportunities nationally for Psychology graduates include the MSc in Health Psychology at NUI Galway, a four-year structured doctorate at NUI Galway, a distance learning Health Psychology PgDip/Msc from the University of Ulster, and the Health Research Board Structured PhD Programme in Population Health and Health Services Research (SPHeRE). Health Psychology is also regularly taught to undergraduates in other disciplines such as Medicine, Pharmacy, Physiotherapy, and Nursing.

### 7.1.3 Introduction of an elective structure in third year

One potential limitation of the current provision of the psychology programme is that learners can only study a restricted range of specialisms in psychology. In contrast, all other providers of psychology give learners the opportunity to study electives (see section 5.4.4 for a more thorough analysis). Thus, in addition to the introduction of *Health Psychology* module, the most fundamental proposed change for the revalidation of the programme will be the introduction of electives in the final year of the programme. In order to facilitate this, it was also necessary to change some previously core modules to electives. This decision was based on consultations with the programme team, students, the external examiner, an analysis of the content of other psychology programmes and staff expertise.

The reason for proposing electives is primarily because psychology is a multifaceted discipline with many specialisms and applied fields. It is beyond the scope of the programme to offer all students instruction in every possible direction so, by including electives, students will have the option to explore those specialist fields of interest. It was deemed that stage 3 was the most appropriate stage for electives, given that by then students will have a solid grounding in the core aspects of psychology and will have developed appropriate research and analytical skills. Since most of the modules in third year build on previously covered areas, students will be reasonably informed as to the relevant aspects and directions of those subfields. At this stage, students may also be considering options for further postgraduate study, of which the electives on offer may help inform this process. A further rationale for the inclusion of electives was based on competitor analysis where all 9 of the PSI accredited psychology providers in the country have some form of an elective structure as part of their programme.

At this stage, students may also be considering options for further postgraduate study within or outside the discipline of psychology, of which the electives on offer may help inform this process. A further rationale for the inclusion of electives was based on competitor analysis where all 9 of the PSI accredited psychology providers in the country have some form of an elective structure as part of their programme.

We are proposing 8 electives within the broad discipline of psychology, 6 of which are the same, or similar to, existing modules, and 2 of which are entirely new. These can be seen in the table below:

**Table 33: Proposed electives for the psychology programme**

| Elective               | Overview                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Psychology of Thinking | This module (previously named <i>Advanced Cognitive Psychology and Neuroscience</i> ) has been given a name change to more concisely reflect the content. This was originally a core module in semester 1, stage 3, but is now proposed as an elective. Content and learning outcomes remain similar to before with less emphasis on the neuroscientific element as this will now be focused on in the newly proposed <i>Contemporary Neuroscience</i> module. However it is also acknowledged that the study of human thought and cognition is interdisciplinary in nature which remains a central focus of this module and therefore some aspects of cognitive neuroscience will be discussed. |



|                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|--------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Contemporary Neuroscience                  | This is a newly proposed elective module as the team felt that more dedicated emphasis could be placed on an advanced study of neuroscience given that this is a rapidly growing field. This will be run in semester 2 of stage 3. This advanced module builds on students' existing knowledge from the <i>Biological Bases of Behaviour</i> and introduces them to key topics in current neuroscientific research. Having developed the grounding in stage 2, students will focus on research areas within the rapidly developing field of neuroscience with a focus on the field of social and affective neuroscience. This module will give students an understanding of research techniques in neuroscience as well as covering the most recent developments in neuroscientific research.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Applied Developmental Psychology           | <i>Advanced Developmental Psychology</i> is currently a 10 credit module on the programme but is now proposed to be split into two separate 5 credit electives. Taken together, the content and learning outcomes of these new modules have significant overlap with the originally validated module. The first elective, <i>Applied Developmental Psychology</i> , is proposed to run in semester 1 of stage 3. This module aims to familiarise learners with a number of applied research projects in Developmental Psychology through the exploration of a selection of topics such as Education, Parenting and Bullying, among others. Building on the Developmental and Lifespan Psychology module introduced in first year, this module aims to demonstrate how traditional theories and research in the area can be used to inform evidence-based practice. Focus will be paid to contemporary and on-going research projects in Ireland, including those being piloted by the Early Learning Initiative at NCI.                                                                                                           |
| Educational Psychology                     | This elective will focus more on the field of educational psychology including, some more emphasis on the area of educational assessment. The programme team felt that a specific focus on educational psychology would be of benefit and offers a logical fit with other programmes in the college (e.g. emphasis on teaching and learning and early childhood education) and also links with research taking place within the Early Learning Initiative. Specifically, this module aims to introduce learners to the field of Educational Psychology through providing a descriptive and critical overview of the field of education focusing on the many factors, both psychological and contextual, which impact on students learning. Students will be supported in gaining an insight into the practice of educational and psychological assessment while developing the skills to design Individualised Educational Plans for learners. Focus will be paid to exploring the range of evidence based educational interventions being implemented both nationally and internationally aimed at improving student's outcomes. |
| Evolutionary and Cross-Cultural Psychology | This is a newly proposed elective. When reviewing other providers of psychology a common theme was some coverage of evolutionary and/or cross-cultural psychology. The team felt that this was lacking on the programme and therefore propose this as a new elective to be run in semester 1 of the programme. The aim of this module is to introduce learners to the field of evolutionary psychology and specifically to give learners an insight into how evolution can be used as an explanatory framework for a broad range of topics in psychology. Rather than emphasising genetic determinism, evolutionary psychology views behaviour using an interactionist approach, whereby the social and cultural environment is key in shaping adaptive behaviour. As such this module will also entail discussion of cross-species and cross-cultural differences in aspects of behaviour with a view to shedding light on the role that                                                                                                                                                                                         |

|                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                      | both evolutionary and cultural factors play in a number of psychological, social and cognitive processes.                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Criminal psychology  | This module was originally a core module in semester 1 of stage 3 but is now proposed as an elective given its specialist focus. Content and learning outcomes remain similar to before.                                                                                    |
| Workplace Psychology | This module was originally a core module in semester 2 of stage 3 but is now proposed as an elective given its specialist focus. Content and learning outcomes remain similar to before.                                                                                    |
| Cyberpsychology      | This module was originally a core module in semester 2 of stage 3 but is now proposed as an elective given its specialist focus. Content and learning outcomes remain similar to before however there are a few minor changes proposed which are outlined in section 7.1.4. |

In line with the College's policy on electives, it is also proposed to open up the choice of electives available on other business degrees across the School of Business to psychology students. In doing so psychology students will be given the opportunity to undertake and sample electives from the business portfolio should they wish to do so. The 8 modules selected for inclusion from the business portfolio are all 5 credit modules at stage three, all have been previously validated (2015) on existing Bachelor of Arts programmes and are without prerequisite. A brief summary of the modules and how they correspond to previously existing modules is indicated below.

**Table 34: Proposed business electives open to psychology students**

| Elective                                             | Overview                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Financial Management Tools for the Enterprise</b> | The aim of this module is to ensure graduates are successful in the application of financial management techniques within a business environment. Financial management is the acquisition of financial resources and the assurance of their effective and efficient use. Proper financial management of any enterprise is critical as financial resources are necessary to enhance competitiveness, growth and value creation of any enterprise. |
| <b>Organisational Development</b>                    | The aim of this module is to provide an insight into organisational change and to describe Organisation Development (OD) as an approach to managing that change. The module adopts a practical approach to OD beginning with a definition, the process of organisational develop and the various interventions and models which may be applied in a work based setting.                                                                          |
| <b>Public Relations and Social Media</b>             | The module aims to provide learners with an overview of the role of social media within the digital marketing mix and its capabilities to deliver business objectives. The module will enable learners to develop and execute an online PR strategy and social media strategy such as to support a business start-up or existing enterprise.                                                                                                     |
| <b>International HRM</b>                             | This module aims to review international trends towards globalisation and international business so as to distinguish a range of global organisational structures used by MNEs. In doing so the module will evaluate the key HR functions within multinational enterprises and how EU directives impact on IHRM to assess the challenges facing HRM in the MNE.                                                                                  |

|                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|-------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Contemporary Issues in Reward Management</b> | The aim of this module is give students the knowledge and skills to be able to review and understand reward management and how it can be utilised to effectively reward, motivate, drive change and behaviours and contribute to the overall HR structure supporting the organisational goals and strategies.                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Project Management</b>                       | The module is designed to give participants an understanding of project management within a business context. To enable them to understand how to best manage and complete management projects within a given time-frame. To enable the Learner to administer the resources and skills necessary for the effective running of business projects.                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Ethics and Social Responsibility</b>         | The aim of this module is to facilitate an understanding of the concepts of ethics and to develop the skill of ethical analysis of the practices of business organisations.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Entrepreneurship</b>                         | The aim of this module is to provide learners with an opportunity to explore and understand the pivotal theories, concepts and processes associated with the study of entrepreneurship. To introduce learners to the dynamic world of entrepreneurship and help them to understand key issues faced by entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial businesses. To achieve an overview of the traits and characteristics of entrepreneurs and the organisations that they create and manage. |

All electives are worth 5 credits. Students will choose two in each semester of stage 3. Clearly some electives on both the business degrees and psychology degree are quite specialist and these are therefore restricted in terms of access with some prerequisites specified for certain modules.

For a small number of students, psychology may not be their chosen future career path and so it is incumbent on the College to ensure that it offers students alternative choice. This approach is also consistent with the college-wide strategy to foster inter-disciplinary collaborations across and between discipline areas.

All psychology students seeking to undertake an elective from the business portfolio will be counselled in advanced with regards to the implications of such a choice both in terms of further postgraduate study and PSI requirements. All electives are subject to minimum numbers and timetabling restrictions.

#### **7.1.3.1 Proposed rules for elective structure**

Students will take two electives each semester in addition to their Final Year Project and the relevant core 10 credit module (*Health Psychology* in semester 1 and *Abnormal Psychology* in semester 2). Students will be invited to select their electives in order of preference towards the end of stage 2. Electives will only run subject to a minimum number of 15 students. Where numbers are smaller (for example in the case of the part-time cohort), electives will be chosen based on the preferences of the majority.

In any case where an elective is heavily oversubscribed, the team may consider running this over two separate semesters. Some electives contain prerequisites of stage one or two modules (see specific module descriptors for details on this) however there is nothing to preclude a student taking an elective provisionally scheduled for semester one in semester two for example. There are no restrictions on the particular choice available but students will be encouraged to select subjects which interest them or which they might like to pursue at postgraduate level or to aid in their future

employment options. Elective options will also be subject to staff availability and other resourcing constraints.

#### **7.1.3.2 Programme themes**

All modules on the programme can be identified as fitting into three distinct themes. The first relates to those modules which are core pillars of the discipline. This entails coverage of the core modules within psychology as determined by PSI. The second strand revolves around skills, in particular research methods and statistical skills, but also team work and group-based skills within the *Coaching Psychology* module which represent a particular strength of our programme. These two strands occur simultaneously within the programme at stage 1 and 2. The third strand then builds upon this subject knowledge to enable a more in-depth exploration of particular areas. The culmination of the programme is the Final Year Project which aims to bring together the range of knowledge and skills that students will have accrued over the course of the programme. See Figure 10 for an outline of the programme and how the individual modules correspond to these particular strands with stages indicated in brackets. In addition, those modules in green correspond to electives while those in blue are core.

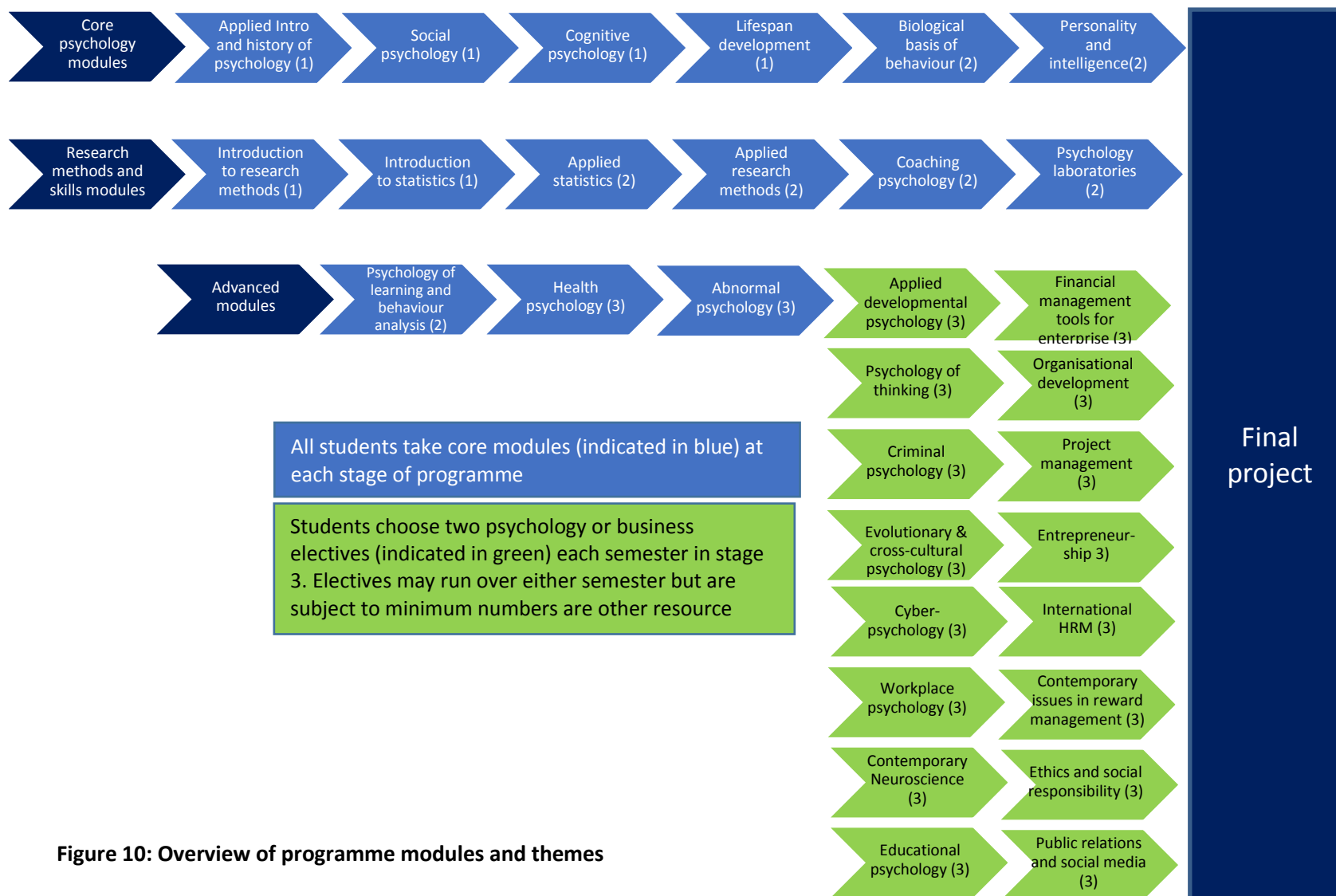


Figure 10: Overview of programme modules and themes

### 7.1.4 Changes to assessment strategy

Programme review has afforded the programme team with the opportunity to fully reflect on the scope of all modules and the appropriateness of the assessment strategy employed. With this in mind we have included in Table 35 a list of all modules as they are currently titled, along with any changes to assessment strategy and their rationale. Our assessment review highlighted a number of considerations which has informed our proposed changes to assessment strategy. Specifically, the programme team considered:

1. Whether overall assessment burden for students could be reduced in any given semester
2. Whether terminal examinations were necessary for all modules
3. Whether modules entailing examinations should always involve a 60:40 exam:CA split
4. Whether examination times need to involve a three from five question structure in 2.5 hours
5. Which examples of innovative assessment should be retained, and which should be removed, modified, or replaced.

Based on this analysis the team proposes to implement the following changes across the programme:

1. Reduce the number of assessments on programme overall and including a reduction in workload involved (e.g. reducing expected word counts for written assignments, or changing assignment types – see later table 35 for a summary of these changes)
2. Change the following modules to become 100% CA: *Introduction to Statistics*, *Applied Statistics*, *Workplace psychology*, *Psychology of Thinking*.
3. Where there is an examination component in modules, to change the breakdown of CA:Exam to 50:50 to reflect a more equal emphasis placed on assessment and examinations.
4. Change the requirements of essay-based terminal exams to typically involve the completion of 2 questions in 2 hours, as opposed to 3 questions in 2.5 hours
5. Include more diverse and applied assessment types including problem based learning activities (*Psychology of Learning and Behaviour Analysis*), case study development (*Workplace psychology*), health interventions (*Health Psychology*) and group debates (*Evolutionary and Cross-Cultural Psychology*) among others.
6. Include more diverse terminal examination strategies for some modules such as the use of short-answer questions, unseen journal articles, and ethics form completion.

**Table 35: Proposed changes to assessment strategy for existing modules**

| Existing module (2016/2017)                    | Proposed change(s) to assessment                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Rationale                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Applied introduction and history of psychology | <p>Currently this module is based on 100% CA and involves five assessments: three essays, one lab report, and one presentation.</p> <p>It is proposed to retain the 100% CA structure but to not separate this into the necessary completion of five assessment pieces. There will still be various aspects of CA work required but the workload involved in assessment completion will be reduced.</p> <p>CA work may involve the following components: a short essay outline, and one full essay (as opposed to</p> | <p>When originally proposed, this module involved 10 pieces of assessment which was deemed to have a significant assessment burden. Given that the focus of this module is on developing a number of core skills required for the study of psychology it was felt that retaining small-stakes assessments was the best strategy however these will not be separated and instead will be included in one overall assessment piece worth 100%.</p> <p>Reducing the workload required for these assessments will mitigate the burden on placed on students as they</p> |

|                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
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|                                  | three essay in the original submission), a short in-class MCQ, and two group assignments requiring the completion of a lab report and presentation.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | enter their first semester of study. The emphasis on group work will also foster the development of core team work, communication, and leadership skills.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Introduction to research methods | <p>Currently this module involves a mixture of CA work (40%) and a terminal examination (60%). This exam has required students to complete three out of five essay based questions in two hours.</p> <p>In line with the programme assessment strategy, it is proposed to change the assessment structure of this module to 50% CA and 50% exam.</p> <p>In addition, the requirements for the major CA (which currently comprises a literature review <u>and</u> a research proposal) will be modified to place more emphasis on the research proposal element. This will entail an overall reduction in expected word count (from 2,000-1,000 words). Formative assessment will be employed to assist students in the development of this assignment in class.</p> <p>The format of the exam will now involve two parts where firstly students will be required to complete a number of short answer questions (Part A), and secondly, a more traditional essay-based question from a choice of 4 topics (Part B)</p> | <p>Reducing the word count for the major CA for this module will minimise the extent of assessment burden on first year students. Developing a comprehensive literature review is similar to the completion of an essay, which is involved in other stage 1 modules such as <i>Social Psychology</i> and was therefore not deemed necessary for this module. However the development of a short proposal requires an understanding of research methods which fits more appropriately with the module learning outcomes.</p> <p>The completion of short answer questions was deemed more appropriate for the study of research methods as it will more broadly assess students' knowledge of core concepts in the discipline. See sample assessment materials in the validation document.</p> |
| Social psychology                | <p>Currently this module involves a mixture of CA work (40%) and a terminal examination (60%). This exam has required students to complete three out of five essay based questions in two hours.</p> <p>In line with the programme assessment strategy, it is proposed to change the assessment structure of this module to 50% CA and 50% exam. The CA requirements will remain the same – that is typically a short MCQ and a 1,000-1,200 word essay, however it is proposed to move the examination so that students will complete two questions from five in two hours.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <p>Increasing the proportion of marks for continuous assessment to 50% is a more balanced approach which is consistent with the programme assessment strategy.</p> <p>Requiring students to complete two questions enables them to engage more deeply with the material and further reduces assessment burden.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |



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| Introduction to statistics | <p>This module is currently assessed by two pieces of CA (40%) and a terminal examination (60%).</p> <p>It is now proposed to move this module to 100% CA with more emphasis placed on the development of practical skills involved in data analysis (50%) as well as a lengthier in-class MCQ (50%).</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | <p>It was felt that a written terminal examination was not necessary to assess the LOs of this module given that the core goal of the statistics modules is to give students the ability to conduct appropriate statistical analysis in practice.</p> <p>In addition, removing one of the three terminal examinations in semester 2 of stage one will significantly reduce the assessment burden on students overall and will make this more consistent with the assessment strategy in semester 1 of first year.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Lifespan development       | <p>Currently this module is assessed by an in-class MCQ (20%), a child observation report (20%) and a terminal examination where students complete three from five questions in 2.5 hours (60%).</p> <p>In line with the programme assessment strategy, it is proposed to change the assessment structure of this module to 50% CA and 50% exam.</p> <p>It is proposed to reduce the weighting of the exam to reflect overall course changes aimed at meeting the needs of a diverse range of students. The terminal examination will now be worth 50% and students will complete two from five questions in 2 hours.</p>                                                                                                            | <p>The change in the current module assessment strategy reflects the overall adjustments to the programme assessment strategy which aim to ensure the programme is meeting the needs of all learners by placing a greater emphasis on continuous assessment work.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Cognitive psychology       | <p>Currently this module is assessed by clicker participation (10%), a lab report (30%) and a terminal examination where students complete three from five questions in 2.5 hours (60%).</p> <p>In line with the programme assessment strategy, it is proposed to change the assessment structure of this module to 50% CA and 50% exam.</p> <p>It is proposed to reduce the requirements for CA such that students will not be required to complete a lab report but instead will produce a short 500 word reflective report on the applications of cognitive psychology along with clicker participation.</p> <p>The examination (50%) will involve a greater diversity of questions. Specifically this will involve two parts</p> | <p>The decision to reduce the CA requirements for this module is in line with our overall goal to reduce assessment burden for students on the programme. The clicker technology has proved to be an effective and innovative way of assessing students' knowledge and engagement so increasing the weighting of this component is merited. In contrast, students get the opportunity to complete a number of lab reports through their degree (Full lab reports are conducted within the <i>Psychology Labs</i> module while a number of other modules entail statistical training) so the completion of an additional report was not deemed necessary at this stage. Reflecting on the applications of cognitive psychology is an important learning outcome of the module so</p> |



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|                                        | <p>where firstly students will be required to complete a number of short answer questions, and secondly, a more traditional essay-based question that will emphasise the applications of cognitive research. This will be 2 hours in duration.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <p>the new assessment reflects the outcome.</p> <p>This module was deemed appropriate to be tested by an examination given the range of theories, concepts and research covered. Changing the examination to a more flexible format will allow students to engage more broadly with the material.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Personality and individual differences | <p>In line with the programme assessment strategy, it is proposed to change the assessment structure of this module to 50% CA and 50% exam.</p> <p>It is proposed to move the examination to the format of 2 from 5 questions in 2 hours</p> <p>Note also a minor change in module title to <i>Personality and Intelligence</i></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | <p>The equal weighting given to continuous assessment and to the exam reflects the equal importance of both types of assessment in the module.</p> <p>As with many of the other exams, the team feel that reducing the number of questions students are required to answer from 3 to 2 will enable them to engage in a more in-depth and comprehensive analysis of particular topics.</p> <p>This title more appropriately reflects the content, given the focus paid to theories and research in intelligence within the module</p>                                                         |
| Biological basis of behaviour          | <p>Currently this module involves three CA components – an MCQ (5%), an essay (15%), and a group lab report involving in the collection of physiological data (20%). There is also an examination component to this where students complete three from five questions in 2.5 hours (60%).</p> <p>In line with the programme assessment strategy, it is proposed to change the assessment structure of this module to 50% CA and 50% exam.</p> <p>It is proposed to reduce the number of CAs so that students will just complete an MCQ and the lab report.</p> <p>It is proposed to move the examination to the format of 2 from 5 questions in 2 hours (50%).</p> | <p>The decision to reduce the CA requirements for this module is in line with our overall goal to reduce assessment burden for students on the programme. The greater emphasis on the lab report reflects the amount of effort required of students in terms of participating in the experiment, analysing, interpreting and presenting the data.</p> <p>As with many of the other exams, the team feel that reducing the number of questions students are required to answer from 3 to 2 will enable them to engage in a more in-depth and comprehensive analysis of particular topics.</p> |
| Applied statistics                     | <p>Currently this module comprises of both CA (40%) and terminal examination (60%). It is proposed to change the assessment structure to become 100% CA with more emphasis placed on the practical and applied skills involved in data analysis.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <p>As with <i>Introduction to Statistics</i> it was felt that a written terminal examination was not necessary to assess the LOs of this module given that the core goal of the statistics modules is to give students the ability to conduct appropriate statistical analysis in practice.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |

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|                                               | Specifically, students will be required to engage in a journal article review (50%), and separately to complete analysis and interpretation of data including the completion of a results and discussion section (50%).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | In addition, removing one of the three terminal examinations in semester 2 of stage two will significantly reduce the assessment burden on students overall and will make this more consistent with the assessment strategy in semester 1 of first year.                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Psychology of learning and behaviour analysis | <p>Currently this module involves the completion of two CAs (20% each) and a terminal examination (60%). In line with the programme assessment strategy, it is proposed to change the assessment structure of this module to 50% CA and 50% exam.</p> <p>It is also proposed to involve only one written CA – the lab report based on behavioural experiments with Sniffy the rat. In addition, CA work will involve continual weekly Problem Based Learning (PBL) activities that will be completed in class. The PBL activities will focus on the behavioural side of the module. Each week students will be given a vignette (case study) in which a problem behaviour is described. The students will have to brain storm practical solutions to the problem. The solutions will be drawn from the likes of behaviour analysis, Cognitive behaviour therapy, acceptance commitment therapy etc. The student will self-grade at the end of the tutorial, and the lecturer will decide whether that grade is appropriate.</p> | <p>The decision to reduce the CA requirements for this module is in line with our overall goal to reduce assessment burden for students on the programme.</p> <p>The PBL activities will make good use of class time and encourage greater participation and engagement with material. In addition, the activities will be designed to investigate the applied aspects of learning, where students will have to apply their learning to real life situations.</p> |
| Coaching psychology                           | The assessment strategy will broadly remain the same which is primarily based on ongoing group work. Currently the students submit a reflective diary (based on weekly entries) at the end of the module that is worth 40% of their overall grade. It is proposed that a slight change to this format be made whereby students will submit 10 reflective diary entries in total worth 4% each. Hard copy entries will be submitted in person at the end of each week in tutorial (12 weeks of class in total, allowing for 2 absences).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | A key component and assessment strategy for this module is group work. In order to maximize this aspect of the module, attendance is a necessary pre-requisite. As such, the newly proposed assessment strategy for the reflective diary is designed to stimulate greater attendance in lecture and tutorial. It will also serve to alleviate assessment burden at the end of the module.                                                                         |
| Psychology labs                               | Currently students submit five lab reports in this module but it is proposed to reduce this number to two minor reports and one major lab                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | The ability to produce a lab report is a critical skill for learners. The development of this skill is retained with the new assessment strategy                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |

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|                                                | <p>report. In addition, students' first CA for this module will now involve simply drafting a lab report outline. The word count for the major lab reports has been reduced from 3,500 to 3,000 words.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <p>however the proposed reduction in word counts will significantly reduce assessment burden which was reported as a particular issue for students in the second year of the programme. Further the new assessment strategy allows for a more rapid dissemination of student feedback ahead of future lab report deadlines.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Applied research methods                       | <p>Currently this module involves two pieces of continuous assessment (40%) and a terminal examination where students complete three from five questions in 2.5 hours (60%).</p> <p>In line with the programme assessment strategy, it is proposed to change the assessment structure of this module to 50% CA and 50% exam.</p> <p>The CA requirements will be similar to before but instead of a lengthy research proposal and 10 minute presentation, students will be required to produce a much shorter proposal and give a three minute presentation (akin to "Thesis in Three" format).</p> <p>In addition, the examination will move to becoming more practical in nature. Students will be required to firstly create an abstract from an unseen journal and secondly to review an ethics proposal. This will last 2 hours.</p> | <p>Given the applied nature of this module, placing more emphasis on students' ability to develop and critically evaluate research proposals is a core skill. The assessment is now deemed more appropriate.</p> <p>In addition, the reduction in requirements for assessment is in keeping with our overall goal to reduce assessment burden for students at this stage of the programme.</p>                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Advanced developmental psychology              | <p>As detailed in section 7.1.3 this module is proposed to be split into two 5- credit electives in <i>Applied Developmental Psychology</i> and <i>Educational Psychology</i> therefore will be retired in its current form.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <p>Specific details on assessment strategy of the two new modules are outlined in the validation document.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Advanced cognitive psychology and neuroscience | <p>As detailed in section 7.1.3 this module is to be moved to an elective. A more concise name change is proposed: "<i>Psychology of Thinking</i>"</p> <p>A change to the assessment strategy has been proposed with more focus on 100% continuous assessment as opposed to an examination-based assessment. This module will now incorporate more diverse assessment methods. The use of a poster presentation will remain but may also be coupled with engagement with</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <p>The name more accurately reflects the content and emphasis placed on advanced topics in human thought and cognition. A separate module <i>Contemporary Neuroscience</i> is also proposed as an elective (see validation document for more information on assessment strategy for this module).</p> <p>The change in assessment will allow students to engage in more diverse ways with the course material. The introduction of a "seen" examination will enable students to work and reflect on this material in class with discussions and feedback from the</p> |

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|                     | clicker technology and an in-class seen examination.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | group and lecturer also acting as formative assessment.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Criminal psychology | <p>As detailed in section 7.1.3 this module is to be moved to an elective.</p> <p>The assessment strategy for this module will remain the same in that one continuous assessment and a terminal exam will be retained. However, the weighting of each component has been amended, along with the number of exam questions to be answered. In line with the programme assessment strategy, it is proposed to change the assessment structure of this module to 50% CA and 50% exam.</p> <p>Additionally, the terminal exam will be changed from answering 3 out of 5 questions in 2.5 hours, to answering 2 out of 5 questions in 2.0 hours.</p> | <p>The general assessment strategy for this module has been maintained. The inclusion of one continuous assessment (essay) was deemed necessary and appropriate to assess student's comprehension of material covered during the semester and to assess the module learning outcomes.</p> <p>Additionally, the terminal exam was retained as it was deemed critical to assessing the module learning outcomes and assessing student's overall comprehension of material covered during the module.</p> <p>The decision to weight the CA and the exam equally at 50% is to signify to students that the CA and the exam are equally important. The decision to require 2 out of 5 exam questions be answered in 2 hours is to allow students to provide greater depth in their answers.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Abnormal psychology | <p>The assessment strategy for this module will remain the same in that one continuous assessment and a terminal exam will be retained. However, the weighting of each component has been amended, along with the number of exam questions to be answered. In line with the programme assessment strategy, it is proposed to change the assessment structure of this module to 50% CA and 50% exam.</p> <p>Additionally, the terminal exam will be changed from answering 3 out of 5 questions in 2.5 hours, to answering 2 out of 5 questions in 2.0 hours.</p>                                                                                | <p>The general assessment strategy for this module has been maintained. The inclusion of one continuous assessment (essay) was deemed necessary and appropriate to assess student's comprehension of material covered during the semester and to assess the module learning outcomes. Moreover, as a stage 3, semester 2 module, the opportunity for students to select their own topic for an essay was deemed an excellent way in which to assess their critical faculties.</p> <p>Additionally, the terminal exam was retained as it was deemed critical to assessing the module learning outcomes and assessing student's overall comprehension of material covered during the module.</p> <p>The decision to weight the CA and the exam equally at 50% is to signify to students that the CA and the exam are equally important. The decision to require 2 out of 5 exam questions be answered in 2 hours is to allow students to provide greater depth in their answers.</p> |

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| Workplace psychology | <p>As detailed in section 7.1.3 this module is to be moved to an elective.</p> <p>Currently this module is assessed via a 60% terminal examination and a 40% case study. It is proposed instead to move this to a 100% CA module. Specifically, it is proposed to change this to a group CA case study that is comprised of the following components: A 1000 word proposal, a 2000 word case study report, and a ten minute presentation.</p>                                                                        | <p>This change in assessment strategy is aimed at not only targeting a practical, problem solving approach to Organisational Psychology but also promoting group work whilst developing presentation skills.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Cyber psychology     | <p>As detailed in section 7.1.3 this module is to be moved to an elective. In line with the programme assessment strategy, it is proposed to change the assessment structure of this module to 50% CA and 50% exam.</p> <p>The continuous assessment will remain the same as before, a research proposal. However it is proposed to reduce the word length of this to 1,800 words.</p>                                                                                                                               | <p>The decision to weight the CA and the exam equally at 50% is to signify to students that the CA and the exam are equally important. The decision to require 2 out of 5 exam questions be answered in 2 hours is to allow students to provide greater depth in their answers.</p> <p>The continuous assessment will remain the same as it is a good test of the current MIMLOs, particularly number 4.</p> |
| Final project        | <p>The overall assessment strategy for the Final Project will remain the same, with 10% of marks going towards the proposal, 80% for the dissertation, and 10% for a presentation.</p> <p>Some minor changes to the implementation of this strategy will be proposed. Specifically, it is proposed to more clearly separate the proposal element from the ethics process.</p> <p>It is also proposed to reduce the submission requirement for the written dissertation from 8,000-10,000 to 6,000 - 8,000 words.</p> | <p>The formal separation of research proposal and ethical review will avoid confusion for students in relation to the two separate elements.</p> <p>The reduction in word-count will encourage students to be more concise in the preparation of their project and also afford them the opportunity to publish their work if this is of an appropriate standard.</p>                                         |

It should be noted also that, although not included in the above table, we have considered the overall programme assessment strategy in the design of the newly proposed core and elective modules on the programme. The specific assessment strategy for all of these modules is described in more detail in the validation document.

Table 36 summarises how the current and proposed assessment strategy differ. This clearly illustrates the decision by the programme team to place more emphasis on continuous assessment over examinations. Overall this approach has significantly reduced the assessment burden placed on students over the three stages of the programme however also ensures that they are exposed to a wide range of assessments which assist in the development of a number of transferable skills.

**Table 36: Current and proposed assessment strategy for programme per stage**

|                      | Assessment measure                             | Current strategy     | Proposed strategy                                           |
|----------------------|------------------------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| Stage 1 of programme | Number of terminal examinations                | 5                    | 4                                                           |
|                      | Length of terminal examinations                | 2 – 2.5 hours        | 2 hours                                                     |
|                      | Total number of exam questions to be completed | 15                   | 8                                                           |
|                      | Weighing of exams for entire stage             | 50%                  | 33.33%                                                      |
|                      | Total expected word count for written CAs      | Approx. 11,000       | Approx 5,400                                                |
|                      | Weighing of assessment for entire stage        | 50%                  | 66.66%                                                      |
| Stage 2 of programme | Number of terminal examinations                | 5                    | 4                                                           |
|                      | Length of terminal examinations                | 2.5 hours            | 2 hours                                                     |
|                      | Total number of exam questions to be completed | 15                   | 8                                                           |
|                      | Weighing of exams for entire stage             | 45%                  | 29%                                                         |
|                      | Total expected word count for written CAs      | Approx. 16,000 words | Approx. 12,000 words                                        |
|                      | Weighing of assessment for entire stage        | 55%                  | 71%                                                         |
| Stage 3 of programme | Number of terminal examinations                | 5                    | 2-6                                                         |
|                      | Length of terminal examinations                | 2.5 hours            | 2 hours                                                     |
|                      | Total number of exam questions to be completed | 15                   | 4-16                                                        |
|                      | Weighing of exams for entire stage             | 30%                  | 17-37%                                                      |
|                      | Total expected word count for written CAs      | Approx. 25,000 words | Varies depending on elective choice but significantly lower |
|                      | Weighing of assessment for entire stage        | 70%                  | 63-83%                                                      |

### 7.1.5 Minor changes to learning outcomes for some modules

All modules were reviewed for the applicability of their learning outcomes in relation to content and assessment. In all cases, MILOs were reviewed to ensure the appropriate use of NFQ level and action verbs so that they fit with the stem “On completion of this module, learners will be able to...”.

Those MILOs that were significantly changed are highlighted below along with the rationale for these changes.

| Existing module | Proposed change(s) | Rationale |
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|-----------------|--------------------|-----------|

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| Applied introduction and history of psychology | <p>Change in LO4 from</p> <p><i>"Recognise the personal relevance of course material, including an increasing awareness of the role of psychological forces in their lives and the lives of others, and an appreciation of the practical value of psychology"</i></p> <p>to:</p> <p><i>"Articulate the role that psychology plays in a range of applied and interdisciplinary settings"</i></p>                                             | <p>The original LO4 wording was deemed to be confusing by the team and was judged to have too much emphasis on the personal relevance of material which may be difficult to objectively assessed. As a core aim of the module is to introduce students to the application of psychological research in a range of settings, the new LO4 was deemed more suitable.</p> |
| Introduction to statistics                     | <p>Minor change in LO5 from</p> <p><i>"Demonstrate a capacity to conduct and interpret basic statistical analysis using SPSS"</i></p> <p>to</p> <p><i>"Demonstrate a capacity to conduct and interpret basic statistical analysis"</i></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <p>While the use of SPSS is a fundamental component of the programme, students interpret statistical analysis more broadly than that limited to SPSS output. Therefore the shortened LO is a more appropriate fit with current teaching, learning and assessment strategies.</p>                                                                                      |
| Lifespan development                           | <p>The original LO4 is proposed to be removed. This outcome was</p> <p><i>"Develop a perspective on the changes that take place during an individual's life from birth to death."</i></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <p>LO4 was deemed highly similar to that of LO1</p> <p><i>"Describe the developing person at different stages across the life span."</i></p> <p>Those four LOs that are to be retained have been deemed to adequately reflect the teaching, learning and assessment for this module.</p>                                                                              |
| Applied research methods                       | <p>Change in LO1 and LO3. These were originally:</p> <p>1) <i>Design a research study</i><br/>3) <i>Design practical research projects</i></p> <p>These two LOs have changed to:</p> <p>1) <i>Design a research study taking into account practical, ethical and methodological considerations</i><br/>3) <i>Evaluate and demonstrate understanding of when different research methods are suitable for specific research questions</i></p> | <p>The original LO1 and LO3 were deemed similar. In addition, it was felt that the original LOs were not reflective of the depth of understanding as is demonstrated in this advanced module. The new LOs are a more appropriate fit with the content and assessment for this module.</p>                                                                             |
| Cyber psychology                               | <p>Minor change in LO3 and LO4. The original LOs were</p> <p>3) <i>Critically evaluate and choose between different analytical frameworks required to examine the</i></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <p>The original LOs were deemed to be similar so have been combined in LO3.</p> <p>In addition, a large emphasis on the course is on the application of cyberpsychological principles to real-</p>                                                                                                                                                                    |



|               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|---------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|               | <p><i>impact of technology on the human mind and behaviour.</i></p> <p><i>4) Demonstrate an integrated knowledge of selected topics from Internet psychology along with research methods needed to analyse them</i></p> <p>These are now proposed as:</p> <p><i>3) Critically evaluate the different methods used in cyberpsychological research.</i></p> <p><i>4) Demonstrate an integrated knowledge of selected topics from cyberpsychology and how they apply to topical real world issues</i></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | <p>world phenomenon. This was not previously reflected in the original LOs.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Final Project | <p>Minor changes in the wording of LOs. LO1 is extended from:</p> <p><i>1) Develop a research proposal based on a literature review, to:</i></p> <p><i>1) Develop an independent research proposal based on a literature review that complies with ethical and professional standards in psychology</i></p> <p>LO3 and LO4 have been combined from</p> <p><i>3) Collect, analyse and interpret data and (4) Undertake sustained independent research work, to:</i></p> <p><i>3) Undertake sustained, independent research work through the collection, analysis, and critical interpretation of data</i></p> <p>Finally, the original LO5 has been divided into two components, from the original</p> <p><i>5) Document and present research findings, to:</i></p> <p><i>4) Document research findings in an appropriate dissertation format that complies with APA standards, and</i></p> <p><i>5) Critically and concisely communicate research by means of an presentation</i></p> | <p>The newly proposed LOs are deemed more appropriate for a stage 3 module and emphasise the critical approach required of students in conducting their research project. These LOs also emphasise the professional standards expected of students in the planning, execution, and interpretation of their research. The new LO5 is especially relevant for the assessment in which students must present their research.</p> |

Regardless of whether any formal changes are proposed above, in all modules staff continually review resources available and regularly update these on a yearly basis (e.g. reading material, both in terms



of core texts, recommended reading, and online resources). In addition, lecturers keep up to date with developments in the relevant sub disciplines and take a flexible approach in terms of the delivery of module content and coverage of certain topics. While it is not anticipated that any major changes will occur in terms of the LOs, assessments strategy and indicative content of the modules over the next five years, it is possible that there may be minor changes regarding content and assessment given the ever-changing nature of the discipline and fields of study.

## 7.2 Action plan for the programme

Following the above comprehensive review of the programme, the psychology team intend to introduce the proposed changes in two phases:

- **2017/2018** – All stage 1 and 2 students will enter the newly proposed programme. As the changes proposed to first and second year modules are relatively minor, this should not have a significant impact on any student who may fail to complete stage 1 or 2 in the current academic year (2016/2017). Any students entering stage 3 in September 2017 will remain on the old programme, given that proposed changes to this stage (such as the introduction of an elective structure) will take more time to implement.
- **2018/2019** – All cohorts of students will be enrolled on the new programme.

Another key aspect of the programme strategy in the 2018/2019 academic year will be to secure re-accreditation from PSI. In order to do this, the programme team must ensure that all guidelines for accreditation are met. By September 2018, there will be seven cohorts of students enrolled on the BA (Hons) Psychology programme (three full-time and four part-time groups) and the stage 3 elective structure will be in place which will necessitate additional lecturing staff. In recruiting new staff members, the team aim to complement the existing expertise in the School by hiring those who have excellent academic and scholarly records. This will further enhance the research profile of the college and increase the range of subject experts that students are exposed to, which is a core aspect of the programme strategy. We aim to ensure that that all modules on the programme are covered by subject experts, and also that a sufficient range of staff are available to supervise final year students as they embark on their research projects.

As it grows, the programme will also likely require additional investment in terms of greater access to physical resources and experimental equipment. Specific needs will vary depending on individual teaching and learning strategies, however investment decisions will also be guided by perceived needs and opportunities for research within the school, as well as trends within the discipline of psychology as a whole. For example, the college has recently purchased new eye-tracking and observation equipment which will strengthen both research and teaching opportunities available to staff and students. The team are always open to new possibilities in terms of teaching and learning strategies, and it is expected that developments in technology will have an impact on future delivery of the programme.

Separate to the current programme, the psychology team aim to offer an MSc in Psychology over the coming years in order to meet learner demand for a postgraduate programme in NCI. In addition, it is envisaged that graduates will be able to pursue a PhD co-supervised by faculty in both NCI and Maynooth University. Such initiatives will further enhance NCI's reputation as a psychology provider which will have positive implications for students enrolled on the BA programme.

## **8 Modified programme and self-evaluation against QQI criteria**

Please see the separate Programme Validation Document which outlines and evaluates the newly proposed programme.

## Independent Programme Review Report

|                           |                             |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>Provider name</b>      | National College of Ireland |
| <b>Date of site visit</b> | 19 <sup>th</sup> April 2017 |
| <b>Date of report</b>     |                             |

|                            |                                                              |                        |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| <b>Principal programme</b> | <b>Title</b>                                                 | BA Hons in Psychology  |
|                            | <b>Award</b>                                                 | Bachelor of Arts       |
|                            | <b>Credit</b>                                                | 180                    |
|                            | <b>Duration<sup>1</sup></b><br><i>(years, months, weeks)</i> | 3 years FT/ 4 years PT |

|     |                                                                                                                          |    |
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## 1 Introduction

The National College of Ireland (NCI), through its two schools, the School of Business and the School of Computing, offers over 80 full-time and part-time programmes at Levels 6-10 of the National Framework of Qualifications. The College's programmes are accredited by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), the Chartered Institute of Personal Development (CIPD), the Institute of Commercial Management (ICM) and, in the case of the BA (Hons) in Psychology programme, the Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI).

Although a company limited by guarantee, the College is partially funded through the Department of Education and Skills for 925 undergraduate full-time students. All other funding comes from student fees and commercial income. As part of its internationalisation strategy, the College is active in India, Malaysia, China and, more recently, Brazil and Africa. Over 50 nationalities are represented within the student body, mainly from communities in the Greater Dublin area.

Enrolment in May 2016 stood at 4,600 (3,700 FTE) of which 43% are part-time. 70% of learners are enrolled on undergraduate programmes which range from major awards to professionally focussed special purpose awards. The College is currently one of the largest providers of Springboard/ICT programmes in the country rising to over 800 places in 2015/16.

Programmes are delivered by a combination of full-time and part-time staff (associate faculty) which bring current experiences and research expertise into the classroom. The College currently has a policy of normally only appointing holders of PhD to full-time faculty and supports any member of staff who is undertaking PhD study both financially and via workload rebalancing. The College currently has 52 full-time academic staff, of whom 60% are holders of a PhD. Within the psychology department, the vast majority hold PhDs (approx. 90% currently).

In 2012, HETAC (now QQI) first validated a Level 8, Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Psychology which was subsequently accredited by the Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI) in February 2014. Since then the programme has grown in popularity and is now one of the most successful programmes in the college, offered to learners on both a full-time and, since September 2015, a part-time basis. NCI are seeking revalidation of the Bachelor of Arts (Honour) in Psychology programme as it is approaching the end of its five year cycle (2012-2017). Following its self-evaluation, NCI concluded that there is a strong rationale for the continued provision of this programme.

## 2 Independent Review Process

### 2.1 Evidence Perused

The following documentation was presented to the Expert Panel to assist members in their evaluation of the programme, viz:

- (a) Terms of Reference for Programme Review and Revalidation;
- (b) Programme Validation documentation;
- (c) Programme Review – Addenda/ Corrigenda
- (d) Self-Evaluation Report
- (e) Policies and criteria for the validation of programmes of education and training (QQI 2016)
- (f) Programme Review Manual (Pilot Implementation Draft) QQI 2016)
- (g) NCI Quality Assurance Procedures;
- (h) NCI Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy;
- (i) NCI Annual Report 2013

Other documentation and policies were sought (and provided by NCI) during the course of the Expert Panel interactions, including:

- (a) Omitted module descriptor – leave out?
- (b) Psychology careers leaflet
- (c) Sample exams and assignments as issued to students
- (d) NCI assessment procedures - marking of student work.

### 2.2 Agenda

See Appendix 2

### 2.3 Persons Met

NCI QA/ Programme Team and Academic Support Staff

Sinéad O Sullivan, Director Quality Assurance & Statistical Services

Dr Maurice FitzGerald, QASS Officer

Dr Fearghal O'Brien, Lecturer in Psychology

Niall McGowan, Psychology Technician

Dr Colette Darcy, Vice Dean Postgraduate Programmes & Research, School of Business

Dr Rebecca Maguire, Lecturer in Psychology & Programme Director

Dr Joanna Power, Lecturer in Psychology

Dr Philip Hyland, Senior Lecturer in Psychology

John McGarrigle, Registrar & Company Secretary

Jonathan Lynch, Educational Engagement Officer - Learning & Teaching

Karen Mooney, Disability & Inclusion Officer

Mary Buckley, Librarian

Jonathan Lambert, Mathematics Development and Support Officer

Dr Gráinne Kent, Lecturer in Psychology

NCI Students/ former Students

Gary Colton, current 3<sup>rd</sup> Year student;

Robert Fox, Graduate and PhD student

### 3 Review of the Programme Review Report

#### 3.1 Fitness for Purpose of the Programme

The Panel is satisfied that Programme Team have articulated in a clear manner the programme concept, its rationale and its fitness of purpose, as evidenced in the programme validation submission and self-evaluation report.

#### 3.2 Achievement of the Programme of its Stated Objectives

The Panel is satisfied that the core objectives, viz:

- (a) to present learners with a comprehensive foundation in the principles and practice of psychology, underpinned by a solid theoretical framework;
- (b) to give learners the opportunity to explore more advanced and specialised aspects of psychology through the offering of a range of core and elective modules, and
- (c) to ensure graduates have a comprehensive understanding of key issues and applications of research within such fields of psychology;

are achievable by each student embarking on this programme.

The Expert Panel noted, however, that evidence of transferable skills such as critical thinking, development of evidence based analysis/ approaches etc should be articulated more clearly within the documentation presented for review.

#### 3.3 Learner Profile

The current profile of students varies between those who are school leavers (i.e. applying through the CAO system), some international students, and mature learners who are returning to education. The former two groups tend to be enrolled in the full-time mode of delivery while the latter group is more frequently enrolled in the part-time mode of delivery.

The vast majority of students across all five full-time cohorts of the existing programme are under the age of 22, with only 6% of these students over the age of 30. This pattern is reversed for the part-time programme, where nearly all students are above the age of 23 with nearly half over the age of 30. In both cohorts, there are more female than male students. It should also be noted that the percentage of females studying the full-time degree has increased steadily from 54% in 2012 to 72% in 2016.

#### 3.4 Learner Performance

There are fairly consistent patterns of student pass/ fail rates over the past 4 years while the programme has been delivered. Of the 31 who completed the programme in 2016, 94% passed. Of these, 19% achieved the pass classification, while 29% and 38% achieved H22 and H21 respectively. The remaining 1% was a First Class Honours award.

According to the evidence presented to the Expert Panel, while the pattern for the H22 and H21 is fairly consistent with the Institutes of Technology and University sectors, the percentage of First Class Honours awarded by NCI are up to 25 percentage points below the benchmarks available from those sectors.

On successful completion of the programme, Graduates are eligible to apply for graduate membership of the Psychological Society of Ireland.

### 3.5 Quality of the Learning Environment

The Expert Panel is satisfied with the quality of the learning environment, but would advise careful monitoring of laboratory resources, in addition to research supervisor/ student ratios should the projected numbers of students materialise.

### 3.6 Suitability of Learner Workload

The Expert Panel is satisfied with the appropriateness of the student workload, both in terms of the National Framework (NFQ) level and volume. However, workload in the context of programme assessment should be reviewed in the light of Section 3.7.

### 3.7 Effectiveness of Procedures for Assessment

While the Expert Panel noted the variety of assessment instruments deployed over the course of the programme, it was of the view that there is an excessive reliance on terminal examination. Excluding the Final Project, 60% of the marks in 18 of the remaining 23 modules were based on terminal examinations.

In the absence of any evidence, the Expert Panel recommend that the rationale underpinning the current Assessment Strategy for the Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Psychology be justified, mindful of exploiting all instruments and opportunities to assess summative and formative learning. The strategy should be based on the professional judgements of the Programme Team arising from the self-evaluation report rather than compliance with wider NCI policy requirements.

The Panel also noted that the 'marking rubrics' contained within the documentation did not convey sufficiently to the students the basis for assessment decisions and marks, and consequently, these should be reviewed to ensure transparency in corrections.

The documentation would also benefit from a clearer elaboration of the 'double-marking' procedures, moderation and role of the External Examiner in the correction procedures. The programme submission should reflect NCI policy in this regard.

Finally, the absence of 'pass by compensation' within the programme was noted and while NCI indicated that PSI sought this as part of their accreditation process, it did not reflect QQI policy. Noting that this was not the practice elsewhere for other PSI accredited programmes in the University and Institute of Technology sectors, this should be addressed in the context of any new accreditation processes with PSI.

The Expert Panel also recommend that the number of External Examiners be reviewed with both the increased number of modules as well as increases in the enrolments.

### 3.8 Quality Assurance Arrangements

The Expert Panel acknowledge the depth and quality of material provided, and in particular, the evidence of quality assurance processes underpinning the documentation. However, it was disappointed with errors in the data analysis (such as student retention and progression etc) which led to requests and clarifications during the engagement process. The student destination data should be monitored more carefully, where there was little evidence of tracking beyond further study. In this regard, given that the Graduate cohorts are now only emerging, NCI should put robust procedures in place to monitor and strengthen employer engagement and feedback.



### 3.9 Proposed Modifications

The following is a summary of the proposed changes to the programme arising from the self-evaluation process, viz:

- (a) The number of Programme Learning Outcomes were reduced to 8, each mapped onto the NFQ generic awards for Level 8;
- (b) A new core module – Health Psychology – will be introduced in the award stage;
- (c) An elective structure will be introduced in the Award Stage, which would allow students to select 4 from 8 from a range of psychology and business modules.
- (d) A number of Module Learning Outcomes will be changed to allow for more precision in light of understanding and assessment;

## 4 Evaluation of the Modified Programme

### 4.1 Report

See Appendix 1

## 5 Outcome of the Review

### 5.1 Summary

The Expert Panel commended the Programme Team for documentation presented in support of the revalidation of the Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Psychology. It was evident that the ethos of collaboration and shared learning was engendered throughout the Programme Team, which laid strong foundations for the continued successful delivery of the programme.

### 5.2 Recommendations

The Expert Panel approves the revalidation of the programme, subject to the following conditions:

- (a) The Programme Team must review the data analysis – student results, retention/ progression patterns and ensure that data is precisely cross-referenced where appropriate. The review should also be accompanied with a detailed reflection on the data, with a view to ensuring it serves the future delivery of the programme;
- (b) The Programme Team should undertake more meaningful stakeholder engagement, including greater feedback with graduate employers (outside of PhD supervisors). This should also include greater engagement with Graduates through the NCI Alumni Association.
- (c) The documentation should be reviewed to ensure that transferrable skills such as critical thinking, building of research evidence base and communications are highlighted. Students valued a clear articulation of these skills;
- (d) The Expert Panel is of the view that the Programme Team should develop a more appropriate programme assessment strategy, including the reduction of dependency (and weighting) on terminal examinations. A more focused programme assessment strategy would allow the Programme Team to explore ways of reducing assessment workload.

As part of this recommendation, the Programme Team should develop precise and understandable assessment rubrics, which should provide the basis for learner assessment feedback;

- (e) NCI should pursue with PSI the basis of 'pass by compensation' condition which was attached to the professional accreditation process;
- (f) The Expert Panel recommend the separation the processes of Research Proposal and Ethical Compliance in the Final Project in the Award Stage.

## 6 Panel

| Evaluators        |                         |                                             |
|-------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| Name              | Role                    | Affiliation                                 |
| Dr Marion Palmer  | Chair                   | Consultant, Formerly IADT                   |
| Mr Ian McKenna    | Secretary               | Director, St Nicholas Montessori College    |
| Dr Sinéad Smyth   | Subject Expert          | Lecturer Psychology, Dublin City University |
| Dr Richard Roche  | Subject Expert          | Lecturer Psychology, Maynooth University    |
| Ms Lauren Jackson | Learner Representative  | Dublin Business School                      |
| Ms Eleanor Butler | Employer Representative | Merchants Quay, Ireland                     |

All members of the panel have declared that they are independent of NCI and have no conflict of interest.

## 7 Appendix 1: Evaluation Report on Modified Programme intended to be submitted as an Application for Revalidation

### Part 1

|                           |                             |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>Provider name</b>      | National College of Ireland |
| <b>Date of site visit</b> | 19 <sup>th</sup> April 2017 |
| <b>Date of report</b>     |                             |
|                           |                             |

|                                         |                     |                    |
|-----------------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
|                                         | <b>First intake</b> | <b>Last intake</b> |
| <b>Enrolment interval</b>               | September 2017      | September 2021     |
| <b>Maximum number of annual intakes</b> | 2 (1 FT; 1 PT)      |                    |

|                            |                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                     |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Principal programme</b> | <b>Title</b>                                                                                                                            | BA Hons in Psychology                                                                                                                               |
|                            | <b>Award</b>                                                                                                                            | Bachelor of Arts (Honours)                                                                                                                          |
|                            | <b>Credit</b>                                                                                                                           | 180                                                                                                                                                 |
|                            | <b>Duration<sup>2</sup></b><br><i>(years, months, weeks)</i>                                                                            | 3 years FT; 4 year PT                                                                                                                               |
|                            | <b>Recommendation</b><br><i>Satisfactory OR<br/>Satisfactory subject to<br/>proposed conditions<sup>3</sup> OR<br/>Not Satisfactory</i> | The Expert Panel recommend revalidation of the Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Psychology, subject to the conditions detailed in Paragraph 5.2 above. |

|                           |                                                                                                                |     |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| <b>Embedded programme</b> | <b>Title</b>                                                                                                   | N/A |
|                           | <b>Award</b>                                                                                                   |     |
|                           | <b>Credit</b>                                                                                                  |     |
|                           | <b>Duration</b><br><i>(years, months, weeks)</i>                                                               |     |
|                           | <b>Recommendation</b><br><b>Satisfactory OR</b><br><b>Satisfactory</b><br><b>subject to</b><br><b>proposed</b> |     |

<sup>2</sup> Expressed in terms of time from initial enrolment to completion

<sup>3</sup> 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.

|  |                                           |  |
|--|-------------------------------------------|--|
|  | <b>conditions OR<br/>Not Satisfactory</b> |  |
|--|-------------------------------------------|--|

|                           |                                                                                                                               |     |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| <b>Module<sup>4</sup></b> | <b>Title</b>                                                                                                                  | N/A |
|                           | <b>Award</b>                                                                                                                  |     |
|                           | <b>Credit</b>                                                                                                                 |     |
|                           | <b>Duration<br/>(years, months,<br/>weeks)</b>                                                                                |     |
|                           | <b>Recommendation<br/>Satisfactory OR<br/>Satisfactory<br/>subject to<br/>proposed<br/>conditions OR<br/>Not Satisfactory</b> |     |

### Evaluators

| <b>Evaluators</b> |                            |                                             |
|-------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| <b>Name</b>       | <b>Role</b>                | <b>Affiliation</b>                          |
| Dr Marion Palmer  | Chair                      | Consultant, Formerly IADT                   |
| Mr Ian McKenna    | Secretary                  | Director, St Nicholas Montessori College    |
| Dr Sinéad Smyth   | Subject Expert             | Lecturer Psychology, Dublin City University |
| Dr Richard Roche  | Subject Expert             | Lecturer Psychology, Maynooth University    |
| Ms Lauren Jackson | Learner<br>Representative  | Dublin Business School                      |
| Ms Eleanor Butler | Employer<br>Representative | Merchants Quay, Ireland                     |

### Principal Programme

| <b>Names of Centres Where the Programmes are to be provided</b> | <b>Maximum<br/>number of<br/>learners</b> | <b>Minimum<br/>number of<br/>learners</b> |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| NCI, Mayor Square, IFSC, Dublin 1                               | 400                                       | 20 per cohort                             |

|                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|---------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Target learner groups</b>                | School leavers, mature learners returning to education, and/or international students.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Number of learners per intake</b>        | Max 90 FT; Max 45 PT                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Approved countries for provision</b>     | Republic of Ireland                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Delivery mode: Full-time/Part-time</b>   | Full-time; Part-time                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>The teaching and learning modalities</b> | A broad range of teaching and learning approaches will take place including traditional classroom teaching (lectures, tutorials), practical computer-based sessions, and experimental lab work. Please refer to section 5.6 for an overview of the Programme Teaching and Learning Strategy, as well as individual module descriptors. |

<sup>4</sup> Modules are only validated if they are to lead to a QQI award.

|                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Brief synopsis of the programme (e.g. who it is for, what is it for, what is involved for learners, what it leads to.)</b> | <p>This programme is a 3 year degree in psychology (4 year part-time) which is designed to provide students with a solid grounding in the core aspects of the discipline in addition to providing exposure to more specialist areas within psychology.</p> <p>There are two modes of delivery for the programme. The full-time mode is generally taken by school leavers (that can apply through the CAO system) and a small number of international students, while the part-time mode is generally taken by mature students or those returning to education.</p> <p>In addition to leading to a Level 8 award, the programme was specifically designed to meet the requirements for PSI accreditation thereby enabling graduates to pursue further training in psychology at postgraduate level.</p> |
| <b>Specifications for teaching staff</b>                                                                                      | Lecturing staff which should normally hold a PhD in Psychology                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Specifications for the ratio of learners to teaching-staff</b>                                                             | 1:90 Lectures<br>1:30 Tutorials                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |

| <b>Programmes being replaced (applicable to applications for revalidation)</b> |                          |                            |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>Code</b>                                                                    | <b>Title</b>             | <b>Last enrolment date</b> |
| <b>PG20002/8M15463</b>                                                         | BA Honours in Psychology | September 2016             |

Other noteworthy features of the application

### INSTRUCTIONS FOR PREPARING THE INDEPENDENT EVALUATION REPORT

Evaluators completing this report are expected to understand **Core policies and criteria for the validation by QQI of programmes of education and training 2016**.

Note that in making its determination QQI

- Will consider the findings of the validation process including the **independent evaluation report** along with the applicant's response to this report;
- May consider any other information received in respect of the process;
- May consider an account of the conduct of the process and its context noting any concerns or complaints expressed by the applicant.

**The independent evaluation report must address whether the programme meets the validation criteria in general and in detail.**

The independent evaluation report must, for each programme, embedded programme and module that leads to a QQI award:

- (1) Outline the salient characteristics of the proposed programmes (Part 1);
- (2) Outline whether and how the QQI validation criteria and sub-criteria are addressed by the application for validation citing evidence from the application documentation and other findings (e.g. from the site visit);
- (3) Address whether the principal programme, and any embedded programme, and any module proposed to lead to a minor award, meets the validation criteria in general and in detail. (Part 2 and Part 3)
- (4) Include one of the following overall conclusions in light of the applicable validation policies and criteria:
  - 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);
  - Not satisfactory.
- (5) 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.

All independent evaluation reports are required to provide a rationale for any proposed special conditions and recommendations to the provider as well as the overall conclusion.

The report may also propose recommendations for consideration by the provider.



## Part 2 Evaluation against the validation criteria

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

### 1 The provider is eligible to apply for validation of the programme

| Satisfactory (yes, no, partially) | Comment                                                                                                                  | Sub criteria                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Yes                               | NCI meets the prerequisites of Section 44(7) of the 2012 Act 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.                                                                                              |
| Yes                               | The application for validation will be signed by the President, Ms. Gina Quinn in due course.                            | 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. |
| Yes                               | National College of Ireland declares that this programme complies with applicable statutory and regulatory requirements. | c) The provider has declared that their programme complies with applicable statutory, regulatory and professional body requirements. <sup>5</sup>                                                              |

*The red italicised text here explains how to use this template, it applies to all sections in Part 2. If there are embedded programmes or modules leading to QQI awards this table (above) should either be replicated for each such programme or the comments and 'satisfactory' results should distinguish between such programmes.*

#### 1.1 Principal programme

*Overall evaluation relating to whether the application meets the criterion in respect of the main programme.*

---

<sup>5</sup> 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.

## 2 The programme objectives and outcomes are clear and consistent with the QQI awards sought

| Satisfactory (yes, no, partially) | Comment                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Sub-criteria                                                                                                                                                         |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Yes                               | The Expert Panel is satisfied that the aims and objectives of the programme are clearly expressed in <b>Section 2.1</b> of the validation document.                                                                                                                                       | a) The programme aims and objectives are expressed plainly.                                                                                                          |
| Yes                               | Successful completion of the programme will lead to Level 8 Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Psychology.                                                                                                                                                                                     | b) A QQI award is specified for those who complete the programme.                                                                                                    |
| Not applicable                    | Not applicable                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | (i) Where applicable, a QQI award is specified for each embedded programme.                                                                                          |
| Yes                               | The Expert Panel is satisfied that NCI has evidenced a rationale for the award.                                                                                                                                                                                                           | c) There is a satisfactory rationale for the choice of QQI award(s).                                                                                                 |
| Yes                               | The chosen award title accords with unit 3.1 of QQI's Policy on this matter.                                                                                                                                                                                                              | d) The award title(s) is consistent with unit 3.1 of QQI's <i>Policy and Criteria for Making Awards</i> .                                                            |
| Yes                               | The Expert Panel is satisfied that the award title is legitimate and fit for purpose, and meets with the requirements for continued PSI accreditation.                                                                                                                                    | 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                                                                                                         |
| Yes                               | The programme title Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Psychology is consistent with the QQI award sought                                                                                                                                                                                      | (i) Consistent with the title of the QQI award sought.                                                                                                               |
| Yes                               | The programme stem within the title denotes the Arts rather than the Science basis of the programme. The Expert Panel is satisfied that students will be provided with a general exposure to many fields within psychology, which will provide the basis for further more specific study. | (ii) Clear, accurate, succinct and fit for the purpose of informing prospective learners and other stakeholders.                                                     |
|                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | g) For each programme and embedded programme                                                                                                                         |
| Yes                               | The MIPLOs of the programme are explicitly specified throughout the document.                                                                                                                                                                                                             | (i) The <b>minimum intended programme learning outcomes</b> and any other educational or training objectives of the programme are explicitly specified. <sup>6</sup> |

<sup>6</sup> Other programme objectives, for example, may be to meet the educational or training requirements of a statutory, regulatory or professional body.

| Satisfactory (yes, no, partially) | Comment                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Sub-criteria                                                                                                                                                                     |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Partially                         | MIPLOs have been mapped against the threads in the Award Type Descriptors issued by QQI. The Expert Panel request the Programme Team to ensure the action verbs used are appropriate to the rigour of the NFQ level. | (ii) The minimum intended programme learning outcomes to qualify for the QQI award sought are <b>consistent with</b> the relevant QQI awards standards.                          |
| Partially                         | With due regard to the previous comment, the MIPLOs of the programme are explicitly specified throughout the document.                                                                                               | h) Where applicable, the <b>minimum intended module learning outcomes</b> are explicitly specified for each of the programme's modules.                                          |
| Not applicable                    | Not applicable.                                                                                                                                                                                                      | i) Any QQI minor awards sought for those who complete the modules are specified, where applicable.                                                                               |
|                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | (i) For each minor award specified, the minimum intended module learning outcomes to qualify for the award are consistent with relevant QQI minor awards standards. <sup>7</sup> |

## 2.1 Principal programme

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<sup>7</sup> 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.

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)

| Satisfactory (yes, no, partially) | Comment                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Sub-criteria                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Partially                         | While evidence of stakeholder engagement was presented, the Expert Panel considered that it was too limited, with a narrow focus on those students pursuing further study. In addition, no documentary evidence was presented on the employment destination of Graduates. Notwithstanding the limited number of Graduate cohorts, the Expert Panel recommend that robust monitoring mechanisms be introduced to identify and grow career paths and build employer relations. | 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. <sup>8</sup> |
| Yes                               | The Expert Panel is satisfied that the generic Level 8 award standards have been interpreted appropriately.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | 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.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Yes                               | The Expert Panel is satisfied that this criterion has been met.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | (i) There is a satisfactory rationale for providing the programme.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Yes                               | NCI presented appropriate comparative evidence in the documentation. The quality of the documentation greatly assisted the Expert Panel in its task.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | (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.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Yes                               | Mindful of the previous comments on stakeholder engagement, the Expert Panel is satisfied that this criterion is satisfied                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | (iii) There is support for the introduction of the programme (such as from employers, or professional, regulatory or statutory bodies).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Yes                               | Increased demand for the programme has been evidenced by NCI.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | (iv) There is evidence <sup>9</sup> of learner demand for the programme.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Partially                         | Evidence was only presented in respect of those graduates pursuing PhDs. The Expert Panel would like more documentary evidence of employment destinations of two graduate cohorts to date. In addition,                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | (v) There is evidence of employment opportunities for graduates where relevant <sup>10</sup> .                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |

<sup>8</sup> 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.

<sup>9</sup> This might be predictive or indirect.

<sup>10</sup> It is essential to involve employers in the programme development and review process when the programme is vocationally or professionally oriented.

|           |                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|-----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|           | the data presentation did not assist the Panel's understanding in this regard.                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Yes       | The Expert Panel is satisfied that this condition has been evidenced by NCI                                                                                                                | (vi) The programme meets genuine education and training needs. <sup>11</sup>                                                                                                                                |
| Partially | Mindful of the comments in criterion 3(a), the Expert Panel recommend that consultation mechanisms be strengthened to reflect the diversity of employment opportunities for the graduates. | c) There are mechanisms to keep the programme updated in consultation with internal and external stakeholders.                                                                                              |
| Partially | See previous comment                                                                                                                                                                       | 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. |
| Yes       | The Expert Panel is satisfied that this condition has been evidenced by NCI                                                                                                                | e) The programme satisfies any validation-related criteria attaching to the applicable awards standards and QQI awards specifications.                                                                      |

### 3.1 Principal programme

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<sup>11</sup> 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.

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

| Satisfactory (yes, no, partially) | Comment                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Sub-criteria                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Yes                               | The Expert Panel is satisfied with explicitness of entry requirement onto the programme, in addition to progression onto further study paths.                                                                                                                                                                           | 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 satisfied <sup>12</sup> . |
| Yes                               | The Expert Panel is satisfied that this criterion is met.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | 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.                                                                                                                                         |
| Yes                               | While evidence of proficiency in English is required by the School of Business for all international applicants by possession of an IELTS qualification at level 6.0, the Expert Panel requested NCI to ensure that this level is sufficient for international students to engage in all strands of programme learning. | 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 (CEFR <sup>13</sup> ) in order to enable learners to reach the required standard for the QQI award.                            |
| Yes                               | The Expert Panel is satisfied that this criterion is met.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | d) The programme specifies the learning (knowledge, skill and competence) that <b>target learners</b> are expected to have achieved before they are enrolled in the programme and any other assumptions about enrolled learners (programme participants).                                                                                                                                                 |
| Yes                               | The Expert Panel is satisfied that this criterion is met and that NCI policy in this regard accords with good practice.                                                                                                                                                                                                 | e) The programme includes suitable procedures and criteria for the <b>recognition of prior learning</b> for the purposes of access and, where appropriate, for advanced entry to the programme and for exemptions.                                                                                                                                                                                        |

<sup>12</sup> 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

<sup>13</sup> [http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Framework\\_EN.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Framework_EN.pdf) (accessed 26/09/2015)

|     |                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|-----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|     |                                                                                                                                         | f) The programme title (the title used to refer to the programme):-                                                                                                                                |
| Yes | The Expert Panel is satisfied that this criterion is met.                                                                               | (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). |
| Yes | The Expert Panel is satisfied that this criterion is met.                                                                               | (ii) Is learner focused and meaningful to the learners;                                                                                                                                            |
| Yes | Drawing on its comparative analysis with programmes in other HEIs, NCI have demonstrated the long-lasting use of Bachelor of Arts stem. | (iii) Has long-lasting significance.                                                                                                                                                               |
| Yes | The Expert Panel is satisfied that this criterion is met.                                                                               | g) The programme title is otherwise legitimate; for example, it must comply with applicable statutory, regulatory and professional body requirements.                                              |

#### 4.1 Principal programme

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

| Satisfactory (yes, no, partially) | Comment                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Sub-criteria                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Yes                               | The Expert Panel is satisfied that this criterion is met.                                                                                                                                                                              | 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. |
| Yes                               | The Expert Panel is satisfied that this criterion is met.                                                                                                                                                                              | 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.                                         |
| Yes                               | The Expert Panel is satisfied that this criterion is met.                                                                                                                                                                              | c) Each module and stage is suitably structured and coherently oriented towards the achievement by learners of the intended <i>programme</i> learning outcomes.                                                                        |
| Yes                               | The Expert Panel is satisfied that this criterion is met.                                                                                                                                                                              | d) The objectives and purposes of each of the programme's elements are clear to learners and to the provider's staff.                                                                                                                  |
| Yes                               | The Expert Panel is satisfied that this criterion is met.                                                                                                                                                                              | e) The programme is structured and scheduled realistically based on sound educational and training principles <sup>14</sup> .                                                                                                          |
| Partially                         | Members of the Expert Panel were of the view that rationale for some modules content should be revisited to ensure coherence of content across all modules and its adherence with current and on-going thinking within the discipline. | f) The curriculum is comprehensively and systematically documented.                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Yes                               | The Expert Panel is satisfied that this criterion is met.                                                                                                                                                                              | g) The credit allocated to the programme is consistent with the difference between the entry standard and minimum intended programme learning outcomes.                                                                                |
| Yes                               | The Expert Panel is satisfied that this criterion is met.                                                                                                                                                                              | h) The credit allocated to each module is consistent with the difference between the module entry standard and minimum intended module learning outcomes.                                                                              |
| Partially                         | Members of the Expert Panel acknowledged the work undertaken by students as part of NCI's Early Learning Initiative. It considered that other experiences of volunteerism and service-learning should be                               | i) Elements such as practice placement and work based phases are provided with the same rigour and attentiveness as other elements.                                                                                                    |

<sup>14</sup> 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.



|           |                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|-----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|           | acknowledged and considered within the programme                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Partially | The Expert Panel is satisfied that this criterion is met. However, the Panel request that separate Approved Programme Schedules for full-time (3 years) and part-time (4 years) be prepared. | j) The programme <b>duration</b> (expressed in terms of time from initial enrolment to completion) and its <b>fulltime equivalent contact time</b> (expressed in hours) are consistent with the difference between the minimum entry standard and award standard and with the credit allocation. <sup>15</sup> |

## 5.1 Principal programme

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<sup>15</sup> If the duration is variable, for example, when advanced entry is available, this should be explained and justified.

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

| Satisfactory (yes, no, partially) | Comment                                                                                                                                                | Sub-criteria                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Yes                               | The Expert Panel is satisfied that this criterion is met.                                                                                              | 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 unit (12c). |
| Yes                               | The Expert Panel is satisfied that this criterion is met. However, the CVs of the lecturing staff should identify the modules taught by each lecturer. | b) The programme has an identified complement of staff <sup>16</sup> (or potential staff) who are available, qualified and capable to provide the specified programme in the context of their existing commitments.                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Yes                               | The Expert Panel is satisfied that this criterion is met.                                                                                              | 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.                                                                                                                |
| Yes                               | The Expert Panel is satisfied that this criterion is met.                                                                                              | 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 development <sup>17</sup> opportunities <sup>18</sup> .                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Yes                               | The Expert Panel is satisfied that this criterion is met.                                                                                              | e) There are arrangements for programme staff performance to be reviewed and there are mechanisms for encouraging development and for addressing underperformance.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Yes                               | The Expert Panel is satisfied that this criterion is met, noting the need for                                                                          | f) Where the programme is to be provided by staff not already in post there are                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |

<sup>16</sup> 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.

<sup>17</sup> 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.

<sup>18</sup> 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.

|  |                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                       |
|--|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  | NCI to monitor and ensure consistency in staff:student ratios in Final Project module, particularly as the numbers of students grow. | arrangements to ensure that the programme will not enrol learners unless a complement of staff meeting the specifications is in post. |
|--|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

## 6.1 Principal programme

## 7 There are sufficient physical resources to implement the programme as planned

| Satisfactory (yes, no, partially) | Comment                                                                                                                                                    | Sub-criteria                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Yes                               | The Expert Panel is satisfied that this criterion is met.                                                                                                  | 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 (12d). |
| Yes                               | The Expert Panel is satisfied that this criterion is met.                                                                                                  | 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:                                                                             |
| Yes                               | The Expert Panel is satisfied that this criterion is met. The Expert Panel welcomed the counselling support provided by NCI to students on this programme. | (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)                                                          |
| Yes                               | The Expert Panel is satisfied that this criterion is met.                                                                                                  | (ii) suitable information technology and resources (including educational technology and any virtual learning environments provided)                                                                                                                                                           |
| Yes                               | The Expert Panel is satisfied that this criterion is met.                                                                                                  | (iii) printed and electronic material (including software) for teaching, learning and assessment                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Yes                               | The Expert Panel is satisfied that this criterion is met. The Expert Panel request that access to laboratory space be closely monitored as numbers grow    | (iv) suitable specialist equipment (e.g. kitchen, laboratory, workshop, studio) – if applicable                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Yes                               | The Expert Panel is satisfied that this criterion is met.                                                                                                  | (v) technical support                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Yes                               | The Expert Panel is satisfied that this criterion is met.                                                                                                  | (vi) administrative support                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Not applicable                    |                                                                                                                                                            | (vii) company placements/internships – if applicable                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Not applicable                    | This programme is only provided on the NCI Campus in the IFSC.                                                                                             | 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                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |

|     |                                                           |                                                                                                                                                             |
|-----|-----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Yes | The Expert Panel is satisfied that this criterion is met. | (i) Planned intake (first five years) and                                                                                                                   |
| Yes | The Expert Panel is satisfied that this criterion is met. | (ii) The total costs and income over the five years based on the planned intake.                                                                            |
| Yes | The Expert Panel is satisfied that this criterion is met. | e) The programme includes controls to ensure entitlement to use the property (including intellectual property, premises, materials and equipment) required. |

## 7.1 Principal programme

## 8 The learning environment is consistent with the needs of the programme's learners

| Satisfactory (yes, no, partially) | Comment                                                                                                                                                                 | Sub-criteria                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Yes                               | The Expert Panel is satisfied that this criterion is met.                                                                                                               | 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. |
| Yes                               | The Expert Panel is satisfied that this criterion is met. It was noted from the students' contributions that the Programme Team were very supportive of their students. | 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.                                                                             |
| Not applicable                    |                                                                                                                                                                         | 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.                                    |

### 8.1 Principal programme

## 9 There are sound teaching and learning strategies

| Satisfactory (yes, no, partially) | Comment                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Sub-criteria                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Yes                               | The Expert Panel is satisfied that this criterion is met.                                                                                                                                                                               | a) The teaching strategies support achievement of the intended programme/module learning outcomes.                                                                                                                               |
| Yes                               | The Expert Panel is satisfied that this criterion is met.                                                                                                                                                                               | b) The programme provides authentic learning opportunities to enable learners to achieve the intended programme learning outcomes.                                                                                               |
| Yes                               | The Expert Panel is satisfied that this criterion is met.                                                                                                                                                                               | 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). |
| Yes                               | The Expert Panel is satisfied that this criterion is met.                                                                                                                                                                               | d) Learning is monitored/supervised.                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Yes                               | The Expert Panel is satisfied that this criterion is met. This support is multi-layered, including learning supports, access to additional resources as appropriate. These are provided through College's Teaching and Learning Centre. | e) Individualised guidance, support <sup>19</sup> and timely formative feedback is regularly provided to enrolled learners as they progress within the programme.                                                                |

### 9.1 Principal programme

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<sup>19</sup> 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.

## 10 There are sound assessment strategies

| Satisfactory (yes, no, partially) | Comment                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Sub-criteria                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Partially                         | While the broad trust of this criterion has been met, the Expert Panel consider that the document would benefit from greater clarification on matters such as second markers, overall assessment load per stage, role of external examiner(s), award classification based on award stage marks etc; | a) All assessment is undertaken consistently with <i>Assessment Guidelines, Conventions and Protocols for Programmes Leading to QQI Awards</i> <sup>20</sup>                                                                                                    |
| Yes                               | The Expert Panel is satisfied that this criterion is met.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | b) The programme's assessment procedures interface effectively with the provider's QQI approved quality assurance procedures.                                                                                                                                   |
| Yes                               | The Expert Panel is satisfied that this criterion is met.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | 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. <sup>21</sup> |
| Yes                               | The Expert Panel is satisfied that this criterion is met, though the document would benefit from appropriate citation of instances of formative learning and assessment. .                                                                                                                          | d) The programme includes formative assessment to support learning.                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Partially                         | Noting the condition attached by the Panel, the Programme Team have been requested to justify the rationale for the proposed Programme Assessment strategy.                                                                                                                                         | e) There is a satisfactory written <i>programme assessment strategy</i> for the programme as a whole and there are satisfactory module assessment strategies for any of its constituent modules. <sup>22</sup>                                                  |
| Yes                               | The Expert Panel is satisfied that this criterion is met.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | 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.                                                           |
| Partially                         | See criterion 10 (a).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | g) There are sound procedures for the moderation of summative assessment results.                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Yes                               | The Expert Panel is satisfied that this criterion is met.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | h) The provider only puts forward an enrolled learner for certification for a                                                                                                                                                                                   |

<sup>20</sup> See the section on transitional arrangements.

<sup>21</sup> This assumes the minimum intended programme/module learning outcomes are consistent with the applicable awards standards.

<sup>22</sup> 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.



|  |  |                                                                                                                                                      |
|--|--|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  |  | particular award for which a programme has been validated if they have been specifically assessed against the standard for that award. <sup>23</sup> |
|--|--|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

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<sup>23</sup> 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).

## 10.1 Principal programme

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

| Satisfactory (yes, no, partially) | Comment                                                                                                                                                        | Sub-criteria                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Yes                               | The Expert Panel is satisfied that this criterion is met.                                                                                                      | 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.                                                                    |
| Yes                               | The Expert Panel is satisfied that this criterion is met.                                                                                                      | b) Information is provided about learner supports that are available to learners enrolled on the programme.                                                                                                                                      |
| Yes                               | The Expert Panel is satisfied that this criterion is met. This material is further complemented by the Teaching and Learning Handbook provided to each student | c) Specific information is provided to learners enrolled on the programme about any programme-specific appeals and complaints procedures.                                                                                                        |
| Not applicable                    |                                                                                                                                                                | 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.                                                                        |
| Yes                               | The Expert Panel is satisfied that this criterion is met.                                                                                                      | 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.                                                                    |
| Yes                               | The Expert Panel is satisfied that this criterion is met, and was evidenced by from the NCI Teaching and Learning Centre.                                      | 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.                                                                             |
| Yes                               | See previous comment.                                                                                                                                          | g) The programme provides supports for enrolled learners who have special education and training needs.                                                                                                                                          |
| Yes                               | See previous comment.                                                                                                                                          | h) The programme makes reasonable accommodations for learners with disabilities <sup>24</sup> .                                                                                                                                                  |
| Yes                               | The Expert Panel is satisfied that this criterion is met.                                                                                                      | i) If the programme aims to enrol international students it complies with the <i>Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes to International Students</i> <sup>25</sup> and there are appropriate in-service supports in areas such as English |

<sup>24</sup> For more information on making reasonable accommodations see [www.AHEAD.ie](http://www.AHEAD.ie) and QQI's Policies, Actions and Procedures for Access, Transfer and Progression for Learners (QQI, restated 2015).

<sup>25</sup> See Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes to International Students (QQI, 2015)

|                |  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|----------------|--|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                |  | 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.                                                                                                 |
| Not applicable |  | 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). |

## 11.1 Principal programme

### 12 The programme is well managed

| Satisfactory<br>(yes, no,<br>partially) | Comment                                                   | Sub-criteria                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Yes                                     | The Expert Panel is satisfied that this criterion is met. | 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.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Yes                                     | The Expert Panel is satisfied that this criterion is met. | 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-the-purpose of identifying which centres are suited to provide the programme and which are not. |
| Yes                                     | The Expert Panel is satisfied that this criterion is met. | 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.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Yes                                     | The Expert Panel is satisfied that this criterion is met. | 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.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Yes                                     | The Expert Panel is satisfied that this criterion is met. | e) Quality assurance <sup>26</sup> is intrinsic to the programme's maintenance arrangements and addresses all aspects highlighted by the validation criteria.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Yes                                     | The Expert Panel is satisfied that this criterion is met. | 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                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |

<sup>26</sup> See also QQI's Policy on Monitoring (QQI, 2014)

|     |                                                           |                                                                                                |
|-----|-----------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|     |                                                           | that may provide insight into the quality and standards achieved.                              |
| Yes | The Expert Panel is satisfied that this criterion is met. | g) The programme operation and management arrangements are coherently documented and suitable. |
| Yes | The Expert Panel is satisfied that this criterion is met. | h) There are sound procedures for interface with QQI certification.                            |

## 12.1 Principal programme

# 13 Overall recommendation to NCI

## 13.1 Principal programme

| 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;                                                                                                                                        |
| The Expert Panel consider the proposal to be satisfactory, subject to conditions identified in Paragraph 5.2 which should be addressed in advance of the proposal being formally submitted to QQI | Satisfactory subject to proposed special conditions (specified with timescale for compliance for each condition; these may include proposed pre-validation conditions i.e. proposed ( <b>minor</b> ) things to be done to a programme that almost fully meets the validation criteria before QQI makes a determination); <sup>27</sup> |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Not satisfactory.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |

### 13.1.1 Reasons<sup>28</sup> for the overall recommendation

The basis for the conclusion is contained in the detailed commentary attached to each of the sub-criterion contained in this report.

## Summary of recommended conditions

These are listed in Paragraph 5.2.

## Summary of recommendations to the provider

These are listed in Paragraph 5.2.

## Declarations of Evaluators' Interests

None were declared by members of the Expert Panel

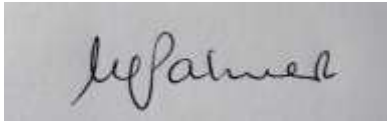
This report has been agreed by the evaluation panel and is signed on their behalf by the chairperson.

<sup>27</sup> 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.

<sup>28</sup> 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.

**Panel chairperson:** Dr Marion Palmer

**Date:** 12<sup>th</sup> May 2017

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in dark ink. The signature appears to be 'M Palmer' written in a cursive style.

Signed:

### [13.2 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

|                                                               |                        |                                                                 |                                                 |                                  |                        |                                            |                                       |                            |                                      |                                   |                                                                  |                             |                            |                                 |                |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------|
| <b>Name of Provider:</b>                                      |                        | National College of Ireland                                     |                                                 |                                  |                        |                                            |                                       |                            |                                      |                                   |                                                                  |                             |                            |                                 |                |
| <b>Programme Title</b>                                        |                        | Higher Diploma in Business in Finance                           |                                                 |                                  |                        |                                            |                                       |                            |                                      |                                   |                                                                  |                             |                            |                                 |                |
| <b>Award Title</b>                                            |                        | Higher Diploma in Business                                      |                                                 |                                  |                        |                                            |                                       |                            |                                      |                                   |                                                                  |                             |                            |                                 |                |
| <b>Stage Exit Award Title</b>                                 |                        | n/a                                                             |                                                 |                                  |                        |                                            |                                       |                            |                                      |                                   |                                                                  |                             |                            |                                 |                |
| <b>Modes of Delivery (FT/PT):</b>                             |                        | FT, PT                                                          |                                                 |                                  |                        |                                            |                                       |                            |                                      |                                   |                                                                  |                             |                            |                                 |                |
| <b>Teaching and learning modalities</b>                       |                        | Classroom based supported by practicals and online learning     |                                                 |                                  |                        |                                            |                                       |                            |                                      |                                   |                                                                  |                             |                            |                                 |                |
| <b>Award Class</b>                                            | <b>Award NFQ level</b> | <b>Award EQF Level</b>                                          | <b>Stage (1, 2, 3, 4, ..., or Award Stage):</b> |                                  | <b>Stage NFQ Level</b> | <b>Stage EQF Level</b>                     | <b>Stage Credit (ECTS)</b>            | <b>Date Effective</b>      | <b>ISCED Subject code</b>            |                                   |                                                                  |                             |                            |                                 |                |
| Higher Diploma                                                | 8                      | 7                                                               | Award                                           |                                  | 8                      | 7                                          | 60                                    | 1/9/17                     | 0412                                 |                                   |                                                                  |                             |                            |                                 |                |
| <b>Module Title</b><br>(Up to 70 characters including spaces) |                        | <b>Semester no where applicable. (Semester 1 or Semester 2)</b> | <b>Module</b>                                   |                                  | <b>Credit Number</b>   | <b>Total Student Effort Module (hours)</b> |                                       |                            |                                      |                                   | <b>Allocation of Marks (from the module assessment strategy)</b> |                             |                            |                                 |                |
|                                                               |                        |                                                                 |                                                 |                                  | <b>Credit Units</b>    |                                            |                                       |                            |                                      |                                   |                                                                  |                             |                            |                                 |                |
|                                                               |                        |                                                                 | <b>Status</b>                                   | <b>NFQ Level where specified</b> | ECTS                   | <b>Total Hours</b>                         | <b>Class (or equiv) Contact Hours</b> | <b>Directed e-learning</b> | <b>Hours of Independent Learning</b> | <b>Work-based learning effort</b> | <b>C.A. %</b>                                                    | <b>Supervised Project %</b> | <b>Proctored practical</b> | <b>Proctored written exam %</b> | <b>Total %</b> |
|                                                               |                        |                                                                 |                                                 |                                  |                        |                                            |                                       |                            |                                      |                                   |                                                                  |                             |                            |                                 |                |
| Financial Markets and Institutions                            |                        | Semester 1                                                      | M                                               | 8                                | 10                     | 250                                        | 39                                    |                            | 211                                  |                                   |                                                                  | 40                          |                            | 60                              | 100            |
| Economics                                                     |                        | Semester 1                                                      | M                                               | 8                                | 10                     | 250                                        | 39                                    |                            | 211                                  |                                   |                                                                  | 40                          |                            | 60                              | 100            |
| Statistical Methods for Finance                               |                        | Semester 1                                                      | M                                               | 8                                | 10                     | 250                                        | 52                                    |                            | 198                                  |                                   | 50                                                               | 50                          |                            |                                 | 100            |
| Financial Accounting and Reporting                            |                        | Semester 2                                                      | M                                               | 8                                | 10                     | 250                                        | 52                                    |                            | 198                                  |                                   | 30                                                               |                             |                            | 70                              | 100            |
| Law and Governance                                            |                        | Semester 2                                                      | M                                               | 8                                | 10                     | 250                                        | 39                                    |                            | 211                                  |                                   | 40                                                               |                             |                            | 60                              | 100            |
| Corporate Finance                                             |                        | Semester 2                                                      | M                                               | 8                                | 10                     | 250                                        | 52                                    |                            | 198                                  |                                   |                                                                  | 30                          |                            | 70                              | 100            |
| <b>Special Regulations</b> (Up to 280 characters)             |                        |                                                                 |                                                 |                                  |                        |                                            |                                       |                            |                                      |                                   |                                                                  |                             |                            |                                 |                |
|                                                               |                        |                                                                 |                                                 |                                  |                        |                                            |                                       |                            |                                      |                                   |                                                                  |                             |                            |                                 |                |



## Part 4: Detailed evaluation of the programme's modules and stages that do not directly lead to QQI awards

In this section each module and stage should be addressed in more detail. The Table should only be completed where a module fails to meet the criteria

Each module has been reviewed and in the view of the panel meet the validation criteria. Exceptions or modules worthy of comment are outlined below:

### Module Name:

|                                   |         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|-----------------------------------|---------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Module or stage title: -          |         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Satisfactory (yes, no, partially) | Comment | <b>Sub-criterion (referenced in bold)</b><br>For this table, the scope is the module or stage even where sub-criteria refer to programme below                                                                                                  |
|                                   |         | <b>2(h)</b> Where applicable, the <b>minimum intended module learning outcomes</b> are explicitly specified for each of the programme's modules.                                                                                                |
|                                   |         | <b>2(i)</b> Any QQI minor awards sought for those who complete the modules are specified, where applicable.                                                                                                                                     |
|                                   |         | <b>2(i)(i)</b> For each minor award specified, the minimum intended module learning outcomes to qualify for the award are consistent with relevant QQI minor awards standards. <sup>29</sup>                                                    |
|                                   |         | <b>3(b)</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.                |
|                                   |         | <b>5(a)</b> 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>5(c)</b> Each module and stage is suitably structured and coherently oriented towards the achievement by learners of the intended <i>programme</i> learning outcomes.                                                                        |
|                                   |         | <b>5(d)</b> The objectives and purposes of each of the programme's elements are clear to learners and to the provider's staff.                                                                                                                  |
|                                   |         | <b>5(e)</b> The programme is structured and scheduled realistically based on sound educational and training principles <sup>30</sup> .                                                                                                          |

<sup>29</sup> 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.

<sup>30</sup> 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.

|                                               |  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|-----------------------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                               |  | <b>5(f)</b> The curriculum is comprehensively and systematically documented.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|                                               |  | <b>5(h)</b> The credit allocated to each module is consistent with the difference between the module entry standard and minimum intended module learning outcomes.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|                                               |  | <b>5(i)</b> Elements such as practice placement and work based phases are provided with the same rigour and attentiveness as other elements.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|                                               |  | <b>6(a)</b> 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 unit (12c). |
|                                               |  | <b>7(a)</b> 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 (12d).                                                                                                           |
|                                               |  | <b>8(c)</b> 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.                                                                                                                                                            |
|                                               |  | <b>9(a)</b> The teaching strategies support achievement of the intended programme/module learning outcomes.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|                                               |  | <b>10(c)</b> 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. <sup>31</sup>                                                                                                                                         |
|                                               |  | <b>10 (e)</b> There is a satisfactory written <b>programme assessment strategy</b> for the programme as a whole and there are satisfactory module assessment strategies for any of its constituent modules. <sup>32</sup>                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Overall evaluation of the stage/module</b> |  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |

<sup>31</sup> This assumes the minimum intended programme/module learning outcomes are consistent with the applicable awards standards.

<sup>32</sup> 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.



## 8 Appendix 2: Agenda

### National College of Ireland Programme Review BA Hons in Psychology Agenda

| Time                                         | Location                                          | Item                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Note                                                                                                                               |
|----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Tuesday<br>18 <sup>th</sup><br>April,<br>6pm | NCI,<br>Boardroom<br>3                            | Panel Pre Meeting                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Call to NCI<br>reception.                                                                                                          |
| 8pm                                          | Clayton<br>Hotel,<br>Cardiff<br>Lane,<br>Dublin 2 | Dinner@ Stir Restaurant                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                    |
| Wed 19 <sup>th</sup><br>April<br>9am         | NCI, Rm<br>4.18                                   | Panel Private Meeting                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                    |
| 9.30am                                       |                                                   | <b>Evaluation of the Programme Review Process and Report</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) the fitness for purpose of the programme (including its objectives, intended learning outcomes, organisation, teaching, learning and assessment strategies, staffing, resources and management) in light of experience;</li> <li>(b) the actual achievement by the programme of its stated objectives;</li> <li>(c) the profile of learners who were enrolled and its suitability for the programme;</li> <li>(d) the performance of enrolled learners (grades, attrition, completion, benchmarking) and how the provider has responded to this;</li> <li>(e) the quality of the learning environment and the learning opportunities afforded to learners by the programme;</li> <li>(f) the suitability of the learner workload in light of experience (whether it is excessive or inadequate);</li> <li>(g) the effectiveness of procedures for the assessment of learners including summative and formative assessment of learners and external examining procedures;</li> <li>(h) the quality assurance arrangements that are specific to the programme</li> </ul> | Vice President;<br>Registrar, Director<br>QASS, Vice Dean<br>PG School of<br>Business,<br>Programme<br>Director,<br>Programme Team |

| Time | Location           | Item                                                                                                                                         | Note                                                                                                                                                      |
|------|--------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|      |                    | (i) the proposed modifications to the programme;                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                           |
|      | <b>10.45am</b>     | <b>Break</b>                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                           |
|      | 11am               | Evaluation of <b>Programme Proposed for Revalidation against QQI validation criteria</b>                                                     | Vice President;<br>Director QASS,<br>Vice Dean PG<br>School of<br>Business,<br>Programme<br>Director,<br>Programme Team                                   |
|      |                    | <b>1. Programme Rationale and overall structure</b>                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                           |
|      |                    | <i>Criterion 3: Programme concept, implementation strategy and interpretation of QQI award standards are well informed and soundly based</i> |                                                                                                                                                           |
|      |                    | <i>Criterion 2: Programme objectives and outcomes are clear and consistent with QQI awards sought</i>                                        |                                                                                                                                                           |
|      |                    | <i>Criterion 4: Access Transfer &amp; Progression arrangements are satisfactory</i>                                                          |                                                                                                                                                           |
|      | <b>12.30pm</b>     | <b>Lunch</b>                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                           |
|      | 1 pm               | <b>2. Curriculum, Learning Teaching &amp; Assessment</b>                                                                                     | Vice President;<br>Director QASS,<br>Vice Dean PG<br>School of<br>Business,<br>Programme<br>Director,<br>Programme Team                                   |
|      |                    | <i>Criterion 5: Written curriculum is well structured and fit for purpose</i>                                                                |                                                                                                                                                           |
|      |                    | <i>Criterion 9: There are sound learning and teaching strategies</i>                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                           |
|      |                    | <i>Criterion 10: There are sound assessment strategies</i>                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                           |
|      | <b>2.30-2.45pm</b> | <b>Break</b>                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                           |
|      |                    | <b>2 continued</b>                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                           |
|      | 3.30-3.45          | <b>3. Meeting with learners</b>                                                                                                              | Group of Learners                                                                                                                                         |
|      | 3.45pm             | <b>4. Resourcing and Supports for Learners</b>                                                                                               | Vice President;<br>Director QASS,<br>Vice Dean PG<br>School of<br>Business,<br>Programme<br>Director,<br>Programme<br>Team, NCI<br>Learning &<br>Teaching |

| Time | Location | Item                                                                                                                           | Note |
|------|----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
|      |          | <i>Criterion 6: There are sufficient qualified and capable programme staff available to implement the programme as planned</i> |      |
|      |          | <i>Criterion 7: There are sufficient physical resources available to implement the programme as planned</i>                    |      |
|      |          | <i>Criterion 8: The learning environment is consistent with the needs of the programme learners</i>                            |      |
|      |          | <i>Criterion 11: Learners enrolled on the programme are well informed and cared for</i>                                        |      |
|      |          | <i>Criterion 12: The programme is well managed</i>                                                                             |      |
|      | 4.30     | <b>Deliberation</b>                                                                                                            |      |
|      | 4.45pm   | <b>Oral feedback</b>                                                                                                           |      |

National College of Ireland  
Programme Review & Revalidation



BA (Hons) Psychology  
Programme Team **Response to Panel's Report**

May 2017

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## 1 Introduction

On 19<sup>th</sup> April 2017, an expert panel visited NCI to evaluate NCI's review of and submission for application for revalidation of the BA (Hons) Psychology by QQI. The panel delivered their formal report on 12<sup>th</sup> May 2017 and we were pleased to note that this report recommended the programme be submitted to QQI for re-validation subject to conditions and recommendations. In this document we clearly outline how these conditions have now been met, while also signposting where any changes have been made in the documentation (Section 2). We also document how we have now more fully demonstrated how the programme met the criteria for validation in comparison to our original submission (Section 3).

## 2 Conditions for revalidation

Below we state the six conditions that were highlighted in the panel's report along with our response to each.

### 2.1 Condition A: Review of data analysis

***Full condition (a): The Programme Team must review the data analysis – student results, retention/progression patterns and ensure that data is precisely cross-referenced where appropriate. The review should also be accompanied with a detailed reflection on the data, with a view to ensuring it serves the future delivery of the programme***

The programme documentation has been carefully reviewed to ensure consistency and accuracy in the labelling and presentation of data. For example, we have labelled all cohorts consistently according to academic year (i.e. 2012/2013, 2013/2014 etc.), we have clarified numbers of respondents (N) for various sources of data gathered, and we have clearly labelled X and Y axes of figures where appropriate. Additional detail has been provided on students entering the programme in terms of the range and median CAO points for each cohort (Table 4 in Self-Evaluation Report).

In terms of student progression patterns (Section 3.4 of the Self-Evaluation Report), this information has been reviewed for accuracy based on information provided by NCI's careers office. More updated information has been provided on the most recent graduating cohort (2015/2016).

A more thorough reflection of all data is included throughout the document with a conclusion of reflections presented in Section 6 of the Self-Evaluation Report. This analysis has been conducted in conjunction with our assessment review (see later response to condition d).

### 2.2 Condition B: Stakeholder Engagement

***Full condition (b): The Programme Team should undertake more meaningful stakeholder engagement, including greater feedback with graduate employers (outside of PhD supervisors). This should also include greater engagement with Graduates through the NCI Alumni Association.***

Following the panel visit, the programme team undertook a wider stakeholder engagement with (1) graduates of the programme who were currently in employment, (2) current employers of graduates, and (3) prospective employers of graduates. We have now included an analysis of this feedback in Sections 5.2 (graduate feedback) and Section 5.3 (employer feedback) of the Self-Evaluation Report. Feedback from potential employers is included in Section 5.5 (External consultations). This feedback is also included in the relevant sections of the validation document. As is evidenced here, graduates of the programme are well equipped to pursue a range of career paths and have many options beyond pursuing further study. In addition, the wide range of transferable skills (see response to condition C) ensures that graduates of the programme are attractive to employers in a range of settings.

The Career's office in NCI currently follows up with all graduates six months after graduation however at present there is no formal Alumni Association in the college. To address this, there are plans to more formally develop an Alumni Association for NCI in 2017. This information is explained in more detail in Section 3.4.3.2.

## 2.3 Condition C: Transferable Skills

***Full condition (c): The documentation should be reviewed to ensure that transferrable skills such as critical thinking, building of research evidence base and communications are highlighted. Students valued a clear articulation of these skills***

Following the suggestions from the panel, the programme team carefully considered a range of transferable skills that are gained by students during the course of the programme. It was evident that the programme involves the development of a diverse set of skills, including those relating to communication, critical thinking, analysis, creativity, and project management, among others. A breakdown of these skills is now included in the *self-evaluation report* in Section 5.4.3 with a more comprehensive analysis of how these skills are evidenced in the MIPLOs and module assessment types in the *validation document* (Section 3.2). For future deliveries of the programmes, a list of these skills will be clearly articulated to students via the programme handbook and in relevant modules. In addition, the careers office will engage with students at an earlier stage of the programme than previously (stage 2 instead of stage 3) which will look at possible careers for graduates and how their transferable skills could be packaged for future employers.

## 2.4 Condition D: Programme Assessment Strategy

***Full condition (d): The Expert Panel is of the view that the Programme Team should develop a more appropriate programme assessment strategy, including the reduction of dependency (and weighting) on terminal examinations. A more focused programme assessment strategy would allow the Programme Team to explore ways of reducing assessment workload.***

***As part of this recommendation, the Programme Team should develop precise and understandable assessment rubrics, which should provide the basis for learner assessment feedback.***

The changes made to our assessment strategy represent the most significant alteration to the proposed programme in comparison to our original submission. Following the interesting discussions that ensued during the panel visit, the programme team undertook an in-depth reflection as to whether the current assessment strategy was the most optimal for the programme. We were happy to be questioned by the panel as to whether our approach to the weighting, length, and format of exams was necessary and were hence inspired to pursue a more flexible assessment strategy. We have included an overview of the processes involved in our reflection on assessment in Section 3.7.4 and later Section 7.1.4 of the self-evaluation report. Prior to this we have now included a detailed breakdown of assessment on the currently-validated programme in Section 3.7.2 (Table 20) as well as an overview of the current assessment schedule (Table 21). In our discussion of current assessment we have also included more detailed information on NCI assessment policies and procedures as requested by the panel (Section 3.7.1).

Following our reflection on assessment we present an overview of the proposed changes in the context of our self-evaluation report (Section 7.1.4). Here we include a table highlighting the changes to individual modules (Table 35) as well as a broader analysis of how we propose to reduce assessment burden for students on the programme (Table 36). As can be seen here, we propose to reduce the dependency on exams while simultaneously increasing the marks awarded for continuous assessment (a 50/50 split has been employed for those modules involving an exam). For stage one and two of the programme students will only take two terminal examinations per semester with number of exams in stage three varying depending on elective choice. Where appropriate we have reduced the burden expected of students in preparing assessments (including reducing the word length of some written

assignments and including more group-based and in-class assessments as well as more time dedicated to the preparation of assessments in class). Changes in assessment strategy were also intended to further enhance the transferable skills developed by students on the programme as outlined in relation to the previous condition.

We have included past assessment material in a new appendix as well as sample assessment material for the proposed modules in the module descriptors themselves. In the assessment appendix we have also proposed a number of rubrics for the marking of assessment pieces, including a standard essay rubric and a standard lab report rubric. Rubrics are also included for some other modules – for example a rubric for a group debate is included in the *Evolutionary and Cross-Cultural Psychology* module. We have also developed a rubric for the research proposal element of the *Final Project*. Taking on board the panel's recommendation, the team plans to produce more focused and detailed rubrics such as these as the programme progresses.

## 2.5 Condition E: Pass-by-compensation

***Full condition (e): NCI should pursue with PSI the basis of 'pass by compensation' condition which was attached to the professional accreditation process***

A programme regulations section has been added (5.10.6). The quotation from the PSI report which demonstrates the PSI stipulation and condition for accreditation that no modules be allowed pass-by-compensation in stage 2 of the programme. However we agree with the panel that, as this is not an explicit condition for accreditation as outlined in the PSI guidelines for undergraduate accreditation, it should not pose a barrier for students wishing to apply for graduate membership of the society. We will now permit students to pass-by-compensation at stage one of the programme from the academic year 2017/2018. In addition, the programme team will highlight this issue with PSI at our next application for reaccreditation of the programme in 2019 with a view to removing the pass-by-compensation condition for stage two and three of the programme from the academic year 2018/2019 forward.

## 2.6 Condition F: Research Proposal in Final Project

***Full condition (f): The Expert Panel recommend the separation the processes of Research Proposal and Ethical Compliance in the Final Project in the Award Stage.***

We have now more clearly separated the research proposal from the ethics application for the *Final Project* module. Students will only be graded on their proposal and will complete a separate form in compliance with NCI ethical standards. More detail of the requirements for the research proposal element is included in the Final Project module descriptor in the validation document. Also included here is a grading rubric for the research proposal element which will be applied from the academic year 2017/2018.

## 3 Validation criteria

In our attached *Evaluation against the Validation Criteria* document, we explicitly note how each of the sub-criteria have been met by the programme. Rather than list all these again here, we have singled out those which were indicated as being partially met in the original submission, or those which had been met, but had some comments attached from the panel. Of the 12 criteria, eight fully met all sub-criteria for validation. Of the remaining four, some sub-criteria were deemed by the panel to be partially met. In these instances we have included the panel's comments on these points as well as our response in the context of the newly presented documentation.

### 3.1 Meeting Criterion 2

**Criterion 2: *The programme objectives and outcomes are clear and consistent with the QQI awards sought***

The panel highlighted two related sub-criteria which were partially met.

| Sub-criteria                                                                                                                                                                                                | Satisfactory (yes, no, partially) | Panel Comment                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Programme team response                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| g) For each programme and embedded programme<br><br>(ii) the minimum intended programme learning outcomes to qualify for the QQI award sought are <b>consistent with</b> the relevant QQI awards standards. | Partially                         | MIPLOs have been mapped against the threads in the Award Type Descriptors issued by QQI. The Expert Panel request the Programme Team to ensure the action verbs used are appropriate to the rigour of the NFQ level. | MIPLOs have been reviewed and modified as appropriate. Specifically, minor changes have been made to MIPLO2 and 8 to include more appropriate action verbs. In addition we have broadened MIPLO5 to remove reference to the word “psychological”. This has enabled a more coherent mapping with other non-psychology electives that involve the dissemination of research. |
| h) Where applicable, the <b>minimum intended module learning outcomes</b> are explicitly specified for each of the programme’s modules.                                                                     | Partially                         | With due regard to the previous comment, the MIPLOs of the programme are explicitly specified throughout the document.                                                                                               | All MIPLOs have been reviewed by the programme team and modified to ensure appropriate use of action verbs at the relevant NFQ level.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |

### 3.2 Meeting Criterion 3

**Criterion 5: *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)***

The panel highlighted three related sub-criteria which were partially met.

| Sub-criteria                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Satisfactory (yes, no, partially) | Panel Comment                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Programme team response                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 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. <sup>1</sup> | Partially                         | While evidence of stakeholder engagement was presented, the Expert Panel considered that it was too limited, with a narrow focus on those students pursuing further study. In addition, no documentary evidence was presented on the employment destination of Graduates. Notwithstanding the limited number of Graduate cohorts, the Expert Panel recommend that robust monitoring mechanisms be introduced to identify and grow career paths and build employer relations. | As mentioned in our response to condition b (Section 2.2), the team have now sought broader stakeholder feedback from a range of sources. Specifically, feedback on the programme has been sought from graduates who went into employment, employers of former students, and potential employers of graduates (see Section 5 of self-evaluation report). This supplements the originally presented information in relation to postgraduate opportunities and information supplied to the panel at the panel meeting. .<br><br>The Programme Team will be taking on the recommendation for robust monitoring mechanisms in order to grow career paths for psychology students in conjunction with the Career's Team. This will be facilitated via earlier engagement with the students at stage 2 of the programme. |
| b) The interpretation of awards standards has been adequately informed and researched; considering the programme aims and objectives and minimum intended programme (and,                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Partially                         | Evidence was only presented in respect of those graduates pursuing PhDs. The Expert Panel would like more documentary evidence of employment destinations of two graduate cohorts to date. In addition, the data presentation did not assist the Panel's understanding in this regard                                                                                                                                                                                        | Greater clarity has been given in relation to employment destinations of graduates (see Section 3.4 in self-evaluation report) and more detailed feedback has been obtained from those who went into employment following their degree.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

<sup>1</sup> 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.

| Sub-criteria                                                                                                                                                                                                | Satisfactory<br>(yes, no,<br>partially) | Panel Comment        | Programme team response                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| where applicable, modular) learning outcomes.<br><br>(v) There is evidence of employment opportunities for graduates where relevant <sup>2</sup> .                                                          |                                         |                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| 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. | Partially                               | See previous comment | As per our previous response to condition b Section 2.2) we have sought a wider range of stakeholder feedback than in the previously validated document. This has supported the current structure of the programme and the range of transferable skills developed. |

### 3.3 Meeting Criterion 4

#### **Criterion 4: *The programme's access, transfer and progression arrangements are satisfactory***

While the panel deemed all sub-criteria to be met here, they had one comment in relation to international proficiency which we have responded to below.

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<sup>2</sup> It is essential to involve employers in the programme development and review process when the programme is vocationally or professionally oriented.

| Sub-criteria                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Satisfactory (yes, no, partially) | Panel Comment                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Programme team response                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 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 (CEFR <sup>3</sup> ) in order to enable learners to reach the required standard for the QQI award. | Yes                               | While evidence of proficiency in English is required by the School of Business for all international applicants by possession of an IELTS qualification at level 6.0, the Expert Panel requested NCI to ensure that this level is sufficient for international students to engage in all strands of programme learning. | In addition to requiring a minimum level of IELTS, all international applicants are interviewed by a member of the programme team to ensure their level of English is sufficient. There are also a range of supports for international students which is facilitated through NCI's International Office. |

### 3.4 Meeting Criterion 5

#### Criterion 5: *The programme's written curriculum is well structured and fit-for-purpose*

The panel highlighted three sub-criteria which were partially met.

| Sub-criteria                                                        | Satisfactory (yes, no, partially) | Panel Comment                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Programme team response                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| f) The curriculum is comprehensively and systematically documented. | Partially                         | Members of the Expert Panel were of the view that rationale for some modules content should be revisited to ensure coherence of content across all modules and its adherence with current and on-going thinking within the discipline. | As part of our comprehensive assessment review, all modules have been revisited in order to ensure that content remains coherent and relevant. For example, the originally proposed <i>Social and Affective Neuroscience</i> has been given a title change to <i>Contemporary Neuroscience</i> based on the panel feedback. We have also ensured that the newly proposed |

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Framework\\_EN.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Framework_EN.pdf) (accessed 26/09/2015)

| Sub-criteria                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Satisfactory<br>(yes, no,<br>partially) | Panel Comment                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Programme team response                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <p>business elective modules are coherently connected with the MIPLOs and have updated the material in the document accordingly.</p> <p>The programme team take a flexible approach to module delivery. As such content is designed so that any updated trends and thinking in the discipline may be incorporated and integrated into the lecture material. Content and assessment topics included in the module descriptors is indicative to allow for any such changes.</p> |
| i) Elements such as practice placement and work based phases are provided with the same rigour and attentiveness as other elements.                                                                                                                                                                           | Partially                               | Members of the Expert Panel acknowledged the work undertaken by students as part of NCI's Early Learning Initiative. It considered that other experiences of volunteerism and service-learning should be acknowledged and considered within the programme | We have now explicitly highlighted that students are actively encouraged to pursue volunteering activities and have included examples of these opportunities in Section 2.5.5 of the self-evaluation report.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| j) The programme <b>duration</b> (expressed in terms of time from initial enrolment to completion) and its <b>fulltime equivalent contact time</b> (expressed in hours) are consistent with the difference between the minimum entry standard and award standard and with the credit allocation. <sup>4</sup> | Partially                               | The Expert Panel is satisfied that this criterion is met. However, the Panel request that separate Approved Programme Schedules for full-time (3 years) and part-time (4 years) be prepared.                                                              | This has now been clarified. Separate programme schedules are included in the validation document in Section 5.12 (full-time programme) and Section 5.13 (part-time programme). In addition a clear overview of the different timetabling requirements for both versions of the programme is provided in Section 5.4.                                                                                                                                                         |

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<sup>4</sup> If the duration is variable, for example, when advanced entry is available, this should be explained and justified.



### 3.5 Meeting Criterion 6

**Criterion 6: *There are sufficient qualified and capable programme staff available to implement the programme as planned***

While the panel deemed all sub-criteria to be met here, they had two comments in relation to this criterion which we have responded to below.

| Sub-criteria                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Satisfactory (yes, no, partially) | Panel Comment                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Programme team response                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| b) The programme has an identified complement of staff <sup>5</sup> (or potential staff) who are available, qualified and capable to provide the specified programme in the context of their existing commitments.    | Yes                               | The Expert Panel is satisfied that this criterion is met. However, the CVs of the lecturing staff should identify the modules taught by each lecturer.                                                             | CVs have now been updated with modules taught and, in the case of newly proposed modules, those that were developed. In addition, we have provided an extra column in Table 2 of Section 2.4.3 in the Self-Evaluation Report which clarifies current modules taught by lecturers.                                          |
| 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. | Yes                               | The Expert Panel is satisfied that this criterion is met, noting the need for NCI to monitor and ensure consistency in staff:student ratios in Final Project module, particularly as the numbers of students grow. | NCI has vast experience in relation to dissertation supervision of a large cohort of students at both undergraduate and taught postgraduate level. In addition, given that 50% of our student population are part-time faculty equally have experience of managing final year projects at level 8 with part-time students. |

### 3.6 Meeting Criterion 7

**Criterion 7: *There are sufficient physical resources to implement the programme as planned***

As with the previous criterion 6, while the panel deemed all sub-criteria to be met here, they had one comment in relation to this which we have responded to below.

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<sup>5</sup> 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.

| Sub-criteria                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Satisfactory (yes, no, partially) | Panel Comment                                                                                                                                           | Programme team response                                                                                                                              |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>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:</p> <p>(iv) suitable specialist equipment (e.g. kitchen, laboratory, workshop, studio) – if applicable</p> | Yes                               | The Expert Panel is satisfied that this criterion is met. The Expert Panel request that access to laboratory space be closely monitored as numbers grow | As with our response to the previous comment, laboratory space will be monitored and increased resources made available should student numbers grow. |

### 3.7 Meeting Criterion 10

#### Criterion 10: *There are sound assessment strategies*

The panel highlighted three sub-criteria which were partially met.

| Sub-criteria                                                                                                                                                | Satisfactory (yes, no, partially) | Panel Comment                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Programme team response                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| a) All assessment is undertaken consistently with <i>Assessment Guidelines, Conventions and Protocols for Programmes Leading to QQI Awards</i> <sup>6</sup> | Partially                         | While the broad trust of this criterion has been met, the Expert Panel consider that the document would benefit from greater clarification on matters such as second markers, overall assessment load per stage, role of external examiner(s), award classification based on award stage marks etc; | We have now included a more detailed overview of the quality assurance procedures involved in the setting and marking of assessment in Section 3.7.1. Assessment load per stage of the current programme is described in detail in Section 3.7.2 with the 2016/2017 assessment schedule included in a separate table here. We have also clarified how the award classification is currently computed based on award mark in Section 3.7.3. In terms |

<sup>6</sup> See the section on transitional arrangements.

| Sub-criteria                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Satisfactory (yes, no, partially) | Panel Comment                                                                                                                                                              | Programme team response                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                   |                                                                                                                                                                            | of the proposed programme, assessment and related issues are discussed in detail in Section 5.10 of the validation document.                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| d) The programme includes formative assessment to support learning.                                                                                                                                           | Yes                               | The Expert Panel is satisfied that this criterion is met, though the document would benefit from appropriate citation of instances of formative learning and assessment. . | We have now explicitly included some examples of formative assessment in module descriptors (Section 6 of validation document) and have made reference to this in relation to our assessment strategy.                                                                                                                                    |
| e) There is a satisfactory written <b>programme assessment strategy</b> for the programme as a whole and there are satisfactory module assessment strategies for any of its constituent modules. <sup>7</sup> | Partially                         | Noting the condition attached by the Panel, the Programme Team have been requested to justify the rationale for the proposed Programme Assessment strategy.                | We have now included a more in-depth reflection on the current programme assessment strategy in Section 7.1.4 of the Self-Evaluation Report. Any changes to assessment have been grounded in a strong rationale (see Table 35). In the validation document, assessment strategy and its rationale is discussed in detail in Section 5.10. |

<sup>7</sup> 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.

| Sub-criteria                                                                      | Satisfactory<br>(yes, no,<br>partially) | Panel Comment         | Programme team response                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| g) There are sound procedures for the moderation of summative assessment results. | Partially                               | See criterion 10 (a). | As per our response to criterion 10 (a) we have now included detailed information in relation to the moderation of summative assessment in Section 3.7.1 of the Self-Evaluation Report with assessment policies and procedures included in the Appendix. |

## 4 Conclusion

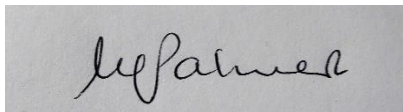
Overall the psychology programme team were delighted to receive the positive and helpful feedback from the panel, both on the day of their visit and through the report itself. The insight gained from colleagues in other institutions was very much appreciated and we feel that this experience has provided us with a valuable opportunity to further enhance our programme. We feel that the modifications made to the programme in light of this feedback has successfully addressed any concerns raised by the panel and we look forward to the response.

**National College of Ireland**  
**BA (Hons) Psychology Programme Review 2017**  
**Reaction of the Panel to the Programme Team Response**

I have read the programme team responses and the amended documentation for the programme review of the BA (Hons) in Psychology. I have received feedback from the members of the other external review panel who have also received and reviewed the amended documentation. I can state that it addresses in a satisfactory manner, all of the conditions and recommendations made by the panel.

Therefore we recommend this programme be submitted to QQI for re validation.

Signed on behalf of the external review panel



Dr Marion Palmer  
Chair

Date: 22 June 2017

| Evaluators        |                         |                                             |
|-------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| Name              | Role                    | Affiliation                                 |
| Dr Marion Palmer  | Chair                   | Consultant, Formerly IADT                   |
| Mr Ian McKenna    | Secretary               | Director, St Nicholas Montessori College    |
| Dr Sinéad Smyth   | Subject Expert          | Lecturer Psychology, Dublin City University |
| Dr Richard Roche  | Subject Expert          | Lecturer Psychology, Maynooth University    |
| Ms Lauren Jackson | Learner Representative  | Dublin Business School                      |
| Ms Eleanor Butler | Employer Representative | Merchants Quay, Ireland                     |