


QQI

 Quality and Qualifications Ireland
 Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann

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

Part 1

Provider name	National College of Ireland
Date of site visit	28/08/2018
Date of report	25/09/2018

Overall recommendations

Principal programme	Title	Diploma in Financial Services for Credit Unions
	Award	Level 7 Diploma in Financial Services for Credit Unions – Special Purpose Award
	Credit	60 ECTS
	Recommendation <i>Satisfactory OR Satisfactory subject to proposed conditions¹ OR Not Satisfactory</i>	Satisfactory subject to proposed conditions

¹ 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.

Embedded programme	Title	Certificate in Credit Union Business
	Award	Certificate in Credit Union Business– Special Purpose Award
	Credit	30 ECTS
	Recommendation <i>Satisfactory OR Satisfactory subject to proposed conditions² OR Not Satisfactory</i>	Satisfactory subject to proposed conditions

Evaluators

Evaluators		
Name	Role	Affiliation
Ann Campbell	Chairperson	Former President, Dundalk Institute of Technology
Joe Fitzgerald	Secretary	Registrar, Dorset College
Pauline Weetman	Subject matter expert (desk review)	Emeritus Professor of Accounting, University of Edinburgh Business School
Joanna Siewierska	Learner Representative	Law with Social Justice programme, UCD
Brian O’Kelly	Subject matter expert	Professor of Finance, DCU
Declan Wall	Industry representative	Risk and Compliance Manager, Leighlin Credit Union

Principal Programme

Names of centres where the programmes are to be provided	Maximum number of learners (per centre)	Minimum number of learners
NCI	25	15
IT Athlone	25	15
Western Management Centre Galway	25	15
ETB Limerick	25	15
Queens University, Belfast	25	15
IT Letterkenny	25	15
Regional College Omagh	25	15

Enrolment interval (normally 5 years)	Date of first intake	January 2019
	Date of last intake	January 2023
Maximum number of annual intakes	2 intakes – September and January, with 3 cohorts per intake	
Maximum total number of learners per intake	150	
Programme duration (months from start to completion)	1 year duration	
Target learner groups	<p>This proposed programme is aimed at volunteers and employees of credit unions who wish to begin their education in credit unions, and/or have a solid understanding of the credit union structure and their own role and responsibilities. Target learners will be for Credit Union officers. Although the officers who enrol on the programme may have quite diverse education backgrounds, the programme is designed for applicants who will normally hold a Major Award qualification in Business or Finance field at level 6, or equivalent, or whose work-based experience and training in ICLU Credit Unions are assessed as appropriate under NCI RPEL policies and procedures.</p> <p>Furthermore, all learners who do not meet the minimum academic requirements will have normally been appointed to such a position in a Credit Union at least 6 months prior to their commencement on this programme.</p>	
Approved countries for provision	Ireland and Northern Ireland	
Delivery mode: Full-time/Part-time	Part-time, day release and/or evenings	
The teaching and learning modalities	Classroom based learning combined with online live classes supplemented with core reading for all modules. Activities in each session will range from: lectures, discussions, quizzes, exercises, review of articles, guest speakers, review of policies, case studies and practical exercises. In addition, there will be online e-tutor support available through the College's learning management system, Moodle	
Brief synopsis of the programme (e.g. who it is for, what is it for, what is involved for learners, what it leads to.)	<p>The programme is a collaborative submission from the National College of Ireland (NCI) and the Irish League of Credit Unions (ILCU) and is intended for transnational provision in Northern Ireland. The reason for this transnational provision is that the Irish League of Credit Unions represents Credit Unions across the Island of Ireland, and thus wishes to facilitate learners from all the members it represents, rather than being exclusionary on geographical grounds. Furthermore, the educational provider has quality assurance agreed for transnational provision and the programme is cognisant of the transnational trait of the programme in its design – for example, having a different module to cover the different</p>	

	<p>regulatory environments in Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.</p> <p>The programme has been specifically designed to satisfy the initial induction requirements for new Credit Union Officers, and it is proposed at level 7 on the National Framework of Qualifications. It has been designed to encourage the education of Credit Union Officers and professionalise their contribution to the movement.</p> <p>The programme opens with three modules () which are specific to credit unions, which will give learners a comprehensive grounding in their sector. There is a tailored legal & regulatory module for each of the jurisdictions, Republic of Ireland & Northern Ireland. The programme then opens out to provide education on the larger financial services sector, which is intended to broaden knowledge beyond the credit union sector. The Diploma programme has an embedded award (Certificate in Credit Union Business) which is a Special Purpose Award.</p> <p>As all learners will be working in the credit union sector while they study, they will be entering a part-time learning programme, in which much of the learning will take place through independent study. Depending on the module, learners will attend one or two full day classes, and two or three live online classes.</p>
<p>Summary of specifications for teaching staff</p>	<p>WTE Qualifications and experience</p> <p>1 Lecturing and teaching staff: Qualification at or above a level 7, Bachelors Degree, on the National Framework of Qualifications. See Conditions below</p> <p>2 Programme Director, Subject matter expert in the area of Banking or Finance, with a Level 9 Masters Degree or equivalent</p> <p>3 Programme co-ordinating roles will be provided by the central co-ordinator assigned to the position from the NCI School of Business.</p>
<p>Summary of specifications for the ratio of learners to teaching-staff</p>	<p>1:25 (Staff to learner ratio)</p> <p>Learning activity type – classroom and online activities</p>

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

n/a

Embedded Programme

Names of centres where the programmes are to be provided	Maximum number of learners (<i>per centre</i>)	Minimum number of learners
NCI	25	15
IT Athlone	25	15
Western Management Centre Galway	25	15
ETB Limerick	25	15
Queens University, Belfast	25	15
IT Letterkenny	25	15
Regional College Omagh	25	15

Enrolment interval (<i>normally 5 years</i>)	Date of first intake	January 2019
	Date of last intake	January 2023
Maximum number of annual intakes	2 intakes – September and January, with 3 cohorts per intake	
Maximum total number of learners per intake	150	
Programme duration (months from start to completion)	1 year duration	
Target learner groups	<p>This proposed programme is aimed at volunteers and employees of credit unions who wish to begin their education in credit unions, and/or have a solid understanding of the credit union structure and their own role and responsibilities. Target learners will be for Credit Union officers. Although the officers who enrol on the programme may have quite diverse education backgrounds, the programme is designed for applicants who will normally hold a Major Award qualification in Business or Finance field at level 6, or equivalent, or whose work-based experience and training in ICLU Credit Unions are assessed as appropriate under NCI RPEL policies and procedures.</p> <p>Furthermore, all learners who do not meet the minimum academic requirements will normally be appointed to such a position in a Credit Union at least 6 months prior to their commencement on this programme. NCI may also engage in advanced standing recognition at an institutional level of the work-based experience and training in the ILCU member credit unions.</p>	
Approved countries for provision	Ireland and Northern Ireland	
Delivery mode: Full-time/Part-time	Part-time, day release and/or evenings	
The teaching and learning modalities	Classroom based learning combined with online live classes supplemented with core reading for all modules. Activities in each session will range from: lectures, discussions, quizzes, exercises, review of articles, guest speakers,	

	<p>review of policies, case studies and practical exercises. In addition, there will be online e-tutor support available through the College's learning management system, Moodle</p>
<p>Brief synopsis of the programme (e.g. who it is for, what is it for, what is involved for learners, what it leads to.)</p>	<p>The programme is specifically designed to satisfy the initial induction requirements for new Credit Union Officers, and it is proposed at level 7 on the National Framework of Qualifications. It has been designed to encourage the education of Credit Union Officers and professionalise their contribution to the movement.</p> <p>The programme comprises three modules specific to credit unions, which will give learners a comprehensive grounding in their sector. Graduates can then transfer to the Diploma in Financial Services for Credit Unions (being proposed for QQI Validation) which broadens out to provide education on the larger financial services sector, which is intended to broaden knowledge well beyond the credit union sector.</p> <p>Additionally, those in the Republic of Ireland who progress have the option of earning a professional designation from Central Bank of Ireland, assuming the appropriate elective modules in the diploma are completed.</p> <p>As all learners will be working in the credit union sector while they study, they will be entering a part-time learning programme, in which much of the learning will take place through independent study. Depending on the module, learners will attend one or two full day classes, and two or three live online classes.</p>
<p>Summary of specifications for teaching staff</p>	<p>WTE Qualifications and experience</p> <p>0.1 Lecturing and teaching staff: Qualification at or above a level 7, Bachelors Degree, on the National Framework of Qualifications. See Conditions below</p> <p>0.1 Programme Director, Subject matter expert in the area of Banking or Finance, with a Level 9 Masters Degree or equivalent</p> <p>0.1 Programme co-ordinating roles will be provided by the central co-ordinator assigned to the position from the NCI School of Business.</p>
<p>Summary of specifications for the ratio of learners to teaching-staff</p>	<p>1:25 (Staff to learner ratio)</p> <p>Learning activity type – classroom and online activities</p>

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

n/a

Part 2 Evaluation against the validation criteria

Criterion 1

The provider is eligible to apply for validation of the programme	
a) The provider meets the prerequisites (section 44(7) of the 2012 Act) to apply for validation of the programme. b) The application for validation is signed by the provider's chief executive (or equivalent) who confirms that the information provided is truthful and that all the applicable criteria have been addressed. c) The provider has declared that their programme complies with applicable statutory, regulatory and professional body requirements. ³	
Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Partially	<p>Though the programmes are collaborative in nature, the National College of Ireland is the owner of the programme and will deliver the programme under its approved Quality Assurance Policies and Procedures. NCI meets the pre-requisites under Section 44 (7) of the 2012 Act to apply for validation of the programme. NCI confirmed to the Panel that the application for validation has been signed by the President, Ms Gina Quin and that a declaration was submitted to QQI at the time of application.</p> <p>Appendix 5 sets out an unsigned Memorandum of Agreement between the National College of Ireland and the Irish League of Credit Unions. This document contains some factual inaccuracies in particular in relation to the role of QQI in relation to this programme. The document is unclear as to the ownership of the programme and the ownership of intellectual property. The panel proposes as a special condition of validation that the MoA should be redrafted to clarify that NCI owns the programmes; that the NCI's approved Quality Assurance Policies and Procedures apply to these programmes; the MoA is not between QQI and the parties but between NCI and the ILCU only; that references to QQI validation documents be removed; that the reference to a QQI examination board be removed; that reference to QQI assessment be removed and that it is acknowledged that differential validation is required for major changes to the programme. The MoA should specify who owns what in terms of intellectual property.</p>

Criterion 2

The programme objectives and outcomes are clear and consistent with the QQI awards sought
a) The programme aims and objectives are expressed plainly. b) A QQI award is specified for those who complete the programme. (i) Where applicable, a QQI award is specified for each embedded programme.

³ 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.

<p>c) There is a satisfactory rationale for the choice of QQI award(s).</p> <p>d) The award title(s) is consistent with unit 3.1 of QQI's <i>Policy and Criteria for Making Awards</i>.</p> <p>e) The award title(s) is otherwise legitimate for example it must comply with applicable statutory, regulatory and professional body requirements.</p> <p>f) The programme title and any embedded programme titles are</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Consistent with the title of the QQI award sought. (ii) Clear, accurate, succinct and fit for the purpose of informing prospective learners and other stakeholders. <p>g) For each programme and embedded programme</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (i) The minimum intended programme learning outcomes and any other educational or training objectives of the programme are explicitly specified.⁴ (ii) The minimum intended programme learning outcomes to qualify for the QQI award sought are consistent with the relevant QQI awards standards. <p>h) Where applicable, the minimum intended module learning outcomes are explicitly specified for each of the programme's modules.</p> <p>i) Any QQI minor awards sought for those who complete the modules are specified, where applicable.</p> <p>For each minor award specified, the minimum intended module learning outcomes to qualify for the award are consistent with relevant QQI minor awards standards.⁵</p>	
Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	<p>The aims and objectives of the Diploma in Financial Services for Credit Unions and those of the embedded programme (Certificate in Credit Union Business) are set out in separate submission documents. The panel is satisfied that these aims and objectives are appropriate and are clearly expressed.</p> <p>The rationale for the principal programme and its embedded award is clearly set out in the submission document and was also presented at the site visit. The Panel is satisfied that the rationale justifies the development of the proposed programme and its embedded award.</p> <p>Regarding the rationale for the programme title, the provider acknowledged that the award is focused on Credit Union personnel, thus the specification of Credit Unions in the title. The self-evaluation document notes on pages 4 and 11 that there are regulations set out by Central Bank of Ireland's Minimum Competency Code specific to credit union activity (The Minimum Competency Code 2017). This requires, amongst other things, that the programme title must be distinguished from other Central Bank accredited qualifications. The Panel is satisfied that the programme title and the title of the embedded award is appropriate and is clear, accurate, succinct and fit for the purpose of informing prospective learners and other stakeholders.</p> <p>The panel noted the distinction between MIPLOs of the Diploma and the embedded award. The MIPLOs for the Diploma are broader than those of the embedded award, which are more specific. The provider justified this difference by demonstrating that the broadening of scope of the Diploma was facilitated by the elective modules.</p>

⁴ Other programme objectives, for example, may be to meet the educational or training requirements of a statutory, regulatory or professional body.

⁵ 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.

	The Panel is satisfied that the minimum intended programme learning outcomes outlined in the submission documents to qualify for the QQI award sought are consistent with the special purpose award type descriptor and Business award standards that were used.
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Criterion 3

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

- a) The development of the programme and the intended programme learning outcomes has sought out and taken into account the views of stakeholders such as learners, graduates, teachers, lecturers, education and training institutions, employers, statutory bodies, regulatory bodies, the international scientific and academic communities, professional bodies and equivalent associations, trades unions, and social and community representatives.⁶
- b) The interpretation of awards standards has been adequately informed and researched; considering the programme aims and objectives and minimum intended programme (and, where applicable, modular) learning outcomes.
 - (i) There is a satisfactory rationale for providing the programme.
 - (ii) The proposed programme compares favourably with existing related (comparable) programmes in Ireland and beyond. Comparators should be as close as it is possible to find.
 - (iii) There is support for the introduction of the programme (such as from employers, or professional, regulatory or statutory bodies).
 - (iv) There is evidence⁷ of learner demand for the programme.
 - (v) There is evidence of employment opportunities for graduates where relevant⁸.
 - (vi) The programme meets genuine education and training needs.⁹
- c) There are mechanisms to keep the programme updated in consultation with internal and external stakeholders.
- d) Employers and practitioners in the cases of vocational and professional awards have been systematically involved in the programme design where the programme is vocationally or professionally oriented.
- e) The programme satisfies any validation-related criteria attaching to the applicable awards standards and QQI awards specifications.

Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	The provider detailed the programme development process comprehensively both in the written submission and at the site visit. Representatives of the ICLU were involved in the development of both programmes as the collaborative partner and were present at the site visit. The views of stakeholders and Credit Union employees

⁶ 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.

⁷ This might be predictive or indirect.

⁸ It is essential to involve employers in the programme development and review process when the programme is vocationally or professionally oriented.

⁹ There is clear evidence that the programme meets the **target learners'** education and training needs and that there is a clear demand for the programme.

	<p>also contributed to the development of the principal programme and its embedded award.</p> <p>The provider decided to develop this programme at NFQ level 7 as the programmes are intended to develop learners' ability to apply concepts to practical scenarios. The programme development team was also cognisant of the Central Bank's MCC criteria, which require that any recognised programme is at least at level 7.</p> <p>Separate programme documents were provided for the principal programme and for the embedded award. Each programme document includes a mapping of the MIPOs to the NFQ level of the awards standards used.</p> <p>The NCI quality assurance policies and procedures will apply to ensure that the programme is maintained and kept up-to-date.</p>
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Criterion 4

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

- a) The information about the programme as well as its procedures for access, transfer and progression are consistent with the procedures described in QQI's policy and criteria for access, transfer and progression in relation to learners for providers of further and higher education and training. Each of its programme-specific criteria is individually and explicitly satisfied¹⁰.
- b) Programme information for learners is provided in plain language. This details what the programme expects of learners and what learners can expect of the programme and that there are procedures to ensure its availability in a range of accessible formats.
- c) If the programme leads to a higher education and training award and its duration is designed for native English speakers, then the level of proficiency in English language must be greater or equal to B2+ in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR¹¹) in order to enable learners to reach the required standard for the QQI award.
- d) The programme specifies the learning (knowledge, skill and competence) that **target learners** are expected to have achieved before they are enrolled in the programme and any other assumptions about enrolled learners (programme participants).
- e) The programme includes suitable procedures and criteria for the **recognition of prior learning** for the purposes of access and, where appropriate, for advanced entry to the programme and for exemptions.
- f) The programme title (the title used to refer to the programme):-

¹⁰ 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

¹¹ http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Framework_EN.pdf (accessed 26/09/2015)

	<p>(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).</p> <p>(ii) Is learner focused and meaningful to the learners;</p> <p>(iii) Has long-lasting significance.</p> <p>g) The programme title is otherwise legitimate; for example, it must comply with applicable statutory, regulatory and professional body requirements.</p>
Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Partially	<p>Access Transfer and Progression criteria and arrangements for progression are outlined in Section 4 of the submission document and the NCI's RPEL arrangements are set out in Appendix 11.</p> <p>The programmes are designed for applicants who will normally hold a Major Award qualification in Business or Finance field at level 6, or equivalent, or whose work-based experience and training in ICLU Credit Unions are assessed as appropriate under NCI RPEL policies and procedures.</p> <p>Programme information is detailed in plain language. The panel is satisfied of the suitability of this information. Furthermore, this information will be available through the NCI and the ICLU to potential learners.</p> <p>Section 4.4 of the programme submission details the progression options that will be available to the graduates of this programme. The panel noted however that Section 1.14 of the Agreement between the National College of Ireland and the Irish League of Credit Unions requires that NCI '<i>not promote or provide information on any other programmes they offer to ICLU students.</i>' The Panel considers that this clause may impede progression and recommends that it be a condition of validation that notwithstanding Clause 1.14 of the above agreement between NCI and ICLU that information about other NCI programmes be made available to learners to allow them to make informed decisions in relation to access, transfer and progression.</p>

Criterion 5

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

- a) The programme is suitably structured and coherently oriented towards the achievement by learners of its intended programme learning outcomes. The programme (including any stages and modules) is integrated in all its dimensions.
- b) In so far as it is feasible the programme provides choice to enrolled learners so that they may align their learning opportunities towards their individual educational and training needs.
- c) Each module and stage is suitably structured and coherently oriented towards the achievement by learners of the intended *programme* learning outcomes.
- d) The objectives and purposes of each of the programme's elements are clear to learners and to the provider's staff.
- e) The programme is structured and scheduled realistically based on sound educational and training principles¹².

¹² This applies recursively to each and every element of the programme from enrolment through to completion.

<p>f) The curriculum is comprehensively and systematically documented.</p> <p>g) The credit allocated to the programme is consistent with the difference between the entry standard and minimum intended programme learning outcomes.</p> <p>h) The credit allocated to each module is consistent with the difference between the module entry standard and minimum intended module learning outcomes.</p> <p>i) Elements such as practice placement and work based phases are provided with the same rigour and attentiveness as other elements.</p> <p>j) The programme duration (expressed in terms of time from initial enrolment to completion) and its fulltime equivalent contact time (expressed in hours) are consistent with the difference between the minimum entry standard and award standard and with the credit allocation.¹³</p>	
Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Partially	<p>The panel examined the programmes' curriculum in detail at the site visit and is satisfied that both the Certificate and Diploma programmes provide adequate choice to enrolled learners. The programme submission documents provide clear and detailed information about the programmes' structure, MIPLOs and MIMLOs.</p> <p>In relation to the structure of both programmes, the panel was not satisfied that there was sufficient differentiation between 5 and 10 credit modules in terms content and of learner effort. The panel proposes as a special condition of validation that Credit Union Ethos, Structure and Core Activities and Credit Union Business, Governance and Regulations are 5 credit modules only. The panel recommends amalgamating Credit Union Ethos, Structure and Core Activities and Credit Union Business, Governance and Regulations to become one 10 credit module. In order to provide a further 10 credits for the embedded award following this amalgamation, the panel recommends moving two 5 credit modules or one 10 credit module from stage 2 to stage 1.</p> <p>It is the panel's view that the workload of a 10 ECTS credit is greater than that of a 5-credit module and proposes that it be a special condition of validation that learners be given a minimum of an additional week of study time at the end of the 10 credit module and prior to examinations.</p>

Criterion 6

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

- a) The specification of the programme's staffing requirements (staff required as part of the programme and intrinsic to it) is precise, and rigorous and consistent with the programme and its defined purpose. The specifications include professional and educational qualifications, licences-to-practise where applicable, experience and the staff/learner ratio requirements. See also criterion 12 c).

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.

¹³ If the duration is variable, for example, when advanced entry is available, this should be explained and justified

<p>b) The programme has an identified complement of staff¹⁴ (or potential staff) who are available, qualified and capable to provide the specified programme in the context of their existing commitments.</p> <p>c) The programme's complement of staff (or potential staff) (those who support learning including any employer-based personnel) are demonstrated to be competent to enable learners to achieve the intended programme learning outcomes and to assess learners' achievements as required.</p> <p>d) There are arrangements for the performance of the programme's staff to be managed to ensure continuing capability to fulfil their roles and there are staff development¹⁵ opportunities¹⁶.</p> <p>e) There are arrangements for programme staff performance to be reviewed and there are mechanisms for encouraging development and for addressing underperformance.</p> <p>f) Where the programme is to be provided by staff not already in post there are arrangements to ensure that the programme will not enrol learners unless a complement of staff meeting the specifications is in post.</p>	
Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Partially	<p>All people teaching on both programmes will be NCI staff, either associate or full-time faculty. They will be encouraged and, in some instances, required to undertake CPD services and facilities offered by NCI. The minimum requirement for the qualifications of teaching staff is set out in NCI's Quality Assurance Policy and Procedures and requires that teaching staff hold a qualification at or above the level of the award which they are teaching. It was not always clear to the panel that the staff qualifications outlined in the CVs provided met this requirement, as some qualifications were not readily identified on the NFQ. The panel proposes as a special condition of validation that all staff involved in the delivery of these programmes must hold a Bachelor's degree qualification at level 7 or above as per NCI's policy.</p>

Criterion 7

There are sufficient physical resources to implement the programme as planned

- a) The specification of the programme's physical resource requirements (physical resources required as part of the programme and intrinsic to it) is precise, and rigorous and consistent with the programme, its defined purpose and its resource/learner-ratio requirements. See also criterion 12 d).

¹⁴ 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.

¹⁵ 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.

¹⁶ 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.

<p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) suitable premises and accommodation for the learning and human needs (comfort, safety, health, wellbeing) of learners (this applies to all of the programme’s learning environments including the workplace learning environment) (ii) suitable information technology and resources (including educational technology and any virtual learning environments provided) (iii) printed and electronic material (including software) for teaching, learning and assessment (iv) suitable specialist equipment (e.g. kitchen, laboratory, workshop, studio) – if applicable (v) technical support (vi) administrative support (vii) company placements/internships – if applicable <p>c) If versions of the programme are provided in parallel at more than one location each independently meets the location-sensitive validation criteria for each location (for example staffing, resources and the learning environment).</p> <p>d) There is a five-year plan for the programme. It should address</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Planned intake (first five years) and (ii) The total costs and income over the five years based on the planned intake. <p>e) The programme includes controls to ensure entitlement to use the property (including intellectual property, premises, materials and equipment) required.</p>	
Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	<p>The remote centres that the provider proposes to use are detailed in Section 1.3 of the submission document. The list includes unspecified venues in Cork and Sligo and refers to ‘<i>other venues as advised by ICLU, depending on demand</i>’. The panel proposes as a special condition of validation that the programme is delivered only in NCI, AIT, the Western Management Centre, Galway, ETB Limerick, Cork IT, QUB, LyIT and the Regional College Omagh. The reason for this is that the panel has not been provided with information of another venue that may be used and thus was not able to verify the appropriateness of any such potential venues.</p> <p>The provider confirmed that it checks each remote location once per year to ensure each meets a sufficient standard. This standard is specified in the provider’s Quality Assurance documentation and focuses on whether a remote location has sufficient classrooms, if these are of an appropriate size, that the necessary technology and supports are provided and if the appropriate health and safety requirements for delivery of a programme are in place (amongst other things). The provider has extensive experience of providing programmes at remote locations and detailed to the panel how such provision works in practice. The panel is satisfied that the programmes can be provided as planned in the named locations.</p>

Criterion 8

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

- a) The programme’s physical, social, cultural and intellectual environment (recognising that the environment may, or example, be partly virtual or involve the workplace) including resources and support systems are consistent with the intended programme learning outcomes.

<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>	
Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	<p>The provider anticipates that learners from across the island of Ireland will enrol on these programmes. The panel is satisfied that the Provider can ensure that appropriate supports are available to remote learners – for example: Adobe Connect will be used for the online delivery element of the programme. The provider also confirmed that all students are treated in the same manner and given the same supports as students on the Dublin campus and that the student experience is not distinguished by the nature of the programme (part-time/full-time etc.), nor by the delivery location. The provider emphasised their engagement with students, citing experience to date and demonstrated how student feedback is facilitated.</p> <p>The library staff is also experienced in offering its services to off-campus students such as facilitating access to students to books/articles where needed (e.g. emailing articles to these students).</p>

Criterion 9

There are sound teaching and learning strategies	
<p>a) The teaching strategies support achievement of the intended programme/module learning outcomes.</p> <p>b) The programme provides authentic learning opportunities to enable learners to achieve the intended programme learning outcomes.</p> <p>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).</p> <p>d) Learning is monitored/supervised.</p> <p>e) Individualised guidance, support¹⁷ and timely formative feedback is regularly provided to enrolled learners as they progress within the programme.</p>	
Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	<p>The panel queried the blended learning methodology that will be used. The provider said that a lesson plan is prepared for each lesson. Thereafter, the provider focuses on workshops/practical application during the face-to-face provision, and more technical</p>

¹⁷ 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.

	<p>material is covered online. There is also a reading requirement that needs to be completed by the learner before the classroom session.</p> <p>Online provision is delivered in 3-hour blocks and strategies are utilised during the 3 hour sessions to ensure active learner engagement.</p> <p>The provider has a track record at blended learning provision, and thus can ensure that the online component of the delivery is as structured and supervised as the traditional delivery method. The provider has invested in a platform that allows them to deliver content through an online platform in a format that facilitates active learning through online interaction. This in turn complements an interactive delivery style that is done in the face-to-face contact time.</p> <p>These deliveries complement the self-directed learning strategy to allow the learner to achieve the relevant MIPLOs and MIMLOs of the programme. The blended learning methodology is important as it ensures that the content is fully delivered in the time available through allowing the provider to deliver content outside of the scheduled face-to-face class times. Consequently, the effective teaching hours per week are increased beyond the stated face-to-face contact hours.</p> <p>Formative feedback is facilitated through in-class interactions and through the provider's VLE platform.</p>
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Criterion 10

There are sound assessment strategies

- a) All assessment is undertaken consistently with *Assessment Guidelines, Conventions and Protocols for Programmes Leading to QQI Awards*¹⁸
- b) The programme's assessment procedures interface effectively with the provider's QQI approved quality assurance procedures.
- c) The programme includes specific procedures that are fair and consistent for the assessment of enrolled learners to ensure the minimum intended programme/module learning outcomes are acquired by all who successfully complete the programme.¹⁹
- d) The programme includes formative assessment to support learning.
- e) There is a satisfactory written **programme assessment strategy** for the programme as a whole and there are satisfactory module assessment strategies for any of its constituent modules.²⁰
- f) Sample assessment instruments, tasks, marking schemes and related evidence have been provided for each award-stage assessment and indicate that the assessment is likely to be valid and reliable.
- g) There are sound procedures for the moderation of summative assessment results.

¹⁸ See the section on transitional arrangements.

¹⁹ This assumes the minimum intended programme/module learning outcomes are consistent with the applicable awards standards.

²⁰ 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.

h) The provider only puts forward an enrolled learner for certification for a particular award for which a programme has been validated if they have been specifically assessed against the standard for that award. ²¹	
Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	<p>The panel queried the scheduling of the programmes, particularly around the assessment workload. The provider detailed some of the mechanisms that are in place to optimise each programme's assessment schedule and mitigate against over assessment. The provider also confirmed that they would liaise closely with the ILCU to avoid scheduling classes/assessment during very busy work periods.</p> <p>The assessment is the same for all students in all centres. The provider has experience in this multi-site delivery structure.</p> <p>The provider confirmed that its existing procedures for appeals and moderation would apply to both these programmes.</p>

Criterion 11

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

- a) There are arrangements to ensure that each enrolled learner is fully informed in a timely manner about the programme including the schedule of activities and assessments.
- b) Information is provided about learner supports that are available to learners enrolled on the programme.
- c) Specific information is provided to learners enrolled on the programme about any programme-specific appeals and complaints procedures.
- d) If the programme is modular, it includes arrangements for the provision of effective guidance services for learners on the selection of appropriate learning pathways.
- e) The programme takes into account and accommodates to the differences between enrolled learners, for example, in terms of their prior learning, maturity, and capabilities.
- f) There are arrangements to ensure that learners enrolled on the programme are supervised and individualised support and due care is targeted at those who need it.
- g) The programme provides supports for enrolled learners who have special education and training needs.
- h) The programme makes reasonable accommodations for learners with disabilities²².
- i) If the programme aims to enrol international students it complies with the *Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes to International Students*²³ and there are appropriate in-service supports in areas such as English language, learning skills, information technology skills and such like, to address the particular needs of international learners and enable such learners to successfully participate in the programme.

²¹ 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).

²² For more information on making reasonable accommodations see www.AHEAD.ie and QQI's Policies, Actions and Procedures for Access, Transfer and Progression for Learners (QQI, restated 2015).

²³ See Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes to International Students (QQI, 2015)

j) The programme's learners will be well cared for and safe while participating in the programme, (e.g. while at the provider's premises or those of any collaborators involved in provision, the programme's locations of provision including any workplace locations or practice-placement locations).	
Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	<p>The provider confirmed that the class rep system engages with ongoing dialogue with the provider's management and administration to ensure that the student experience is as good as possible. This facilitates the feedback of students into the programme administration and management and various committee and board levels.</p> <p>The Learner Handbook provides information on appeals/complaints procedures. This information is also available online. The Learner Handbook has been devised for these programmes and provides relevant information about key policies and procedures that learners may need to be aware of during their studies.</p> <p>The provider confirmed that they have a team of people who can facilitate such students. The provider can also ensure that lecturers are made aware of such provisions as need to be made to such students through the College's CRM system. The provider offers assessment of learners to help diagnose students who require support. This can all be done remotely to facilitate off-campus students.</p>

Criterion 12

The programme is well managed

- a) The programme includes intrinsic governance, quality assurance, learner assessment, and access, transfer and progression procedures that functionally interface with the provider's general or institutional procedures.
- b) The programme interfaces effectively with the provider's QQI approved quality assurance procedures. Any proposed incremental changes to the provider's QA procedures required by the programme or programme-specific QA procedures have been developed having regard to QQI's statutory QA guidelines. If the QA procedures allow the provider to approve the centres within the provider that may provide the programme, the procedures and criteria for this should be fit-for-purpose of identifying which centres are suited to provide the programme and which are not.
- c) There are explicit and suitable programme-specific criteria for selecting persons who meet the programme's staffing requirements and can be added to the programme's complement of staff.
- d) There are explicit and suitable programme-specific criteria for selecting physical resources that meet the programmes physical resource requirements, and can be added to the programme's complement of supported physical resources.
- e) Quality assurance²⁴ is intrinsic to the programme's maintenance arrangements and addresses all aspects highlighted by the validation criteria.
- f) The programme-specific quality assurance arrangements are consistent with QQI's statutory QA guidelines and use continually monitored completion rates and other sources of information that may provide insight into the quality and standards achieved.
- g) The programme operation and management arrangements are coherently documented and suitable.
- h) There are sound procedures for interface with QQI certification.

²⁴ See also QQI's Policy on Monitoring (QQI, 2014)

Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	<p>The provider demonstrated a well-developed management structure for its academic programmes, which also apply to this programme. The provider confirmed that these programmes will have a dedicated programme co-ordinator and programme leader/manager. In addition, the management structures of the provider will also apply (e.g. Dean of School etc.).</p> <p>The provider has an agreed quality assurance, which helps ensure the quality of its programme provision. In addition, the provider demonstrated a developed internal quality assurance check that provides an additional level of rigour for its programme development process, amongst other QA processes.</p> <p>Appendix 5 sets out an unsigned Memorandum of Agreement between the National College of Ireland and the Irish League of Credit Unions. This document contains some factual inaccuracies in particular in relation to the role of QQI in relation to this programme. The document is unclear as to the ownership of the programme and the ownership of intellectual property. The panel proposes as a special condition of validation that the MoA should be redrafted to clarify that NCI owns the programme; that the NCI's approved Quality Assurance Policies and Procedures apply to this programme; the MoA is not between QQI and the parties but between NCI and the ILCU only; that references to QQI validation documents be removed; that the reference to a QQI examination board be removed; that reference to QQI assessment be removed and that it is acknowledged that differential validation is required for major changes to the programme. The MoA should specify who owns what in terms of intellectual property.</p>

Overall recommendation to QQI

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;
√	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); ²⁵
	Not satisfactory.

Embedded 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;
√	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); ²⁶
	Not satisfactory.

Reasons²⁷ for the overall recommendation

The panel is in agreement that key stakeholders collaborated extensively to develop these programmes to meet an identified need in the industry. The programmes' learning outcomes and module learning outcomes are clearly articulated. The panel is aware that access to these programmes will be restricted and this is considered reasonable in the context of this programme and its purpose.

The provider demonstrated a well-developed Quality Assurance structure, which was evidenced in the programme review process that was outlined and the management structure of the school within which this programme will reside. Furthermore, the provider has well-developed learner support mechanisms in place to assist learners.

²⁵ 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.

²⁶ 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.

²⁷ 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.

However, the panel did note that its 'satisfactory' conclusion of this programme validation process for these programmes is subject to some special conditions, which need to be addressed before the programme can be recommended as satisfactory. Details of these special conditions are provided in the section below.

Summary of recommended special conditions of validation

The panel proposes as a special condition of validation that the Memorandum of Agreement should be redrafted to clarify that NCI owns the programme; that the NCI's approved Quality Assurance Policies and Procedures apply to this programme; the agreement is not between QQI and the parties but between NCI and the ILCU only; that references to QQI validation documents be removed; that the reference to a QQI examination board be removed; that reference to QQI assessment be removed and that it is acknowledged that differential validation is required for major changes to the programme. The Agreement should specify who owns what in terms of intellectual property.

The Panel proposes as a special condition of validation that notwithstanding Clause 1.14 of the **Agreement between NCI and ICLU** set out in Appendix 2, that information about other NCI programmes be made available to learners to allow them to make informed decisions in relation to access, transfer and progression.

The panel proposes as a special condition of validation that **Credit Union Ethos, Structure and Core Activities** and **Credit Union Business, Governance and Regulations** are 5 credit modules only. See further recommendation below.

It is the panel's view that the workload of a 10 ECTS credit is greater than that of a 5 credit module and proposes that it be a special condition of validation that learners be given a minimum of an additional week of study time at the end of the 10 credit module and prior to examinations.

The panel proposes as a special condition of validation that all staff involved in the delivery of this programme must hold a qualification at level 7 or above as per NCI's policy.

The panel proposes as a special condition of validation that the programme is delivered only in NCI, AIT, the Western Management Centre, Galway, ETB Limerick, Cork IT, QUB, LyIT and the Regional College Omagh.

Summary of recommendations to the provider

The panel recommends amalgamating **Credit Union Ethos, Structure and Core Activities** and **Credit Union Business, Governance and Regulations** to become one 10 credit module. In order to provide a further 10 credits for the embedded award following this amalgamation, the panel recommends moving two 5 credit modules or one 10 credit module from the elective to the core module suite.

Declarations of Evaluators' Interests

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

Panel chairperson:

Date:

5.12.2018

ANN CAMPBELL

Signed:



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