

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

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

Part 1. Provider details

Provider name	Hibernia College
Date of site visit	02 Jul 2020
Date of report	16th July 2020

Section A. Overall recommendations

Principal programme	Title	Bachelor of Education (Honours) in Early Childhood Education
	Award	Bachelor of Education (Honours)
	Credit	240
	Recommendation <i>Satisfactory OR Satisfactory subject to proposed conditions OR Not Satisfactory</i>	Satisfactory subject to conditions

Section B. Expert Panel

Name	Role	Affiliation
Mr. Terry Twomey	Chair	Director of Technological University Development Limerick Institute of Technology
Ms. Sinead O'Sullivan	Secretary	Director of Quality University of Limerick
Ms Miriam O'Regan	Student perspective	Technological University Dublin
Ms. Karen Higgins	Subject Matter Expert	Academic Director The College of Progressive Education (City Education Group)
Ms. Aoife Cooney	Subject Matter Expert	Lecturer Social Sciences IT Sligo
Ms. Evelyn Reilly	Industry Representative	Owner/Manager Kidz@Play Playschool & Afterschool

Section C. Principal Programme

Names of centre(s) where the programme(s) is to be provided	Maximum number of learners (FT)	Maximum number of learners (PT)
Hibernia College	400	N/A

Proposed Duration and Enrolment					
	First Intake Date	Duration	Intakes per Annum	Enrolment i.e. learners per Intake	
			Maximum	Minimum	Maximum
Full-Time	01 Sep 2020	4 years	1	30	400
Part-Time	01 Sep 2020		0	0	0

Panel Commentary on proposed enrolment: The panel had some initial concerns regarding the maximum proposed enrolment per intake. Over a four-year period, the potential enrolment on the programme could arrive at 1600 learners. The panel heard that while this number was set for validation purposes, Hibernia College would only enrol the numbers of learners that it could fully support. While understanding that this maximum is set to allow for programme planning over a number of years, the **panel recommends that the enrolment numbers are monitored to ensure that an appropriate student experience is provided, that suitably qualified staff can be recruited to support this enrolment and that the placement experience of the learner is not impacted.**

Brief synopsis of the programme (e.g. who it is for, what is it for, what is involved for learners, what it leads to.)

This four-year programme is for those wishing to become Early Years Educators. It is designed to provide recognised accreditation at Level 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

This is a blended learning programme where students will engage in a variety of face to face and online engagements. In addition, through Professional Practice Placement and the provision of a well-structured mentoring Professional Support Team (PST), across the four years of the programme, learners will engage in multiple opportunities to act and reflect on their emerging understanding of knowledge, practice and values and critically examine their commitment to quality in diverse situations.

The programme aims to:

Provide the early childhood sector with highly competent, research-engaged, critically reflexive, reflective, analytical and evaluative practitioners.

Ensure graduates are confident and competent to address the challenges of a constantly evolving sector with high regulatory requirements.

Prepare graduate early childhood educators with knowledge, skills and competencies to enhance their employability and entrepreneurial talents.

The programme satisfies the aims outlined in the Department of Education and Skills (2019) Professional Award Criteria and Guidelines for Initial Professional Education (level 7 and level 8) Degree Programmes for Early Learning and Care (ELC) Sector in Ireland and the Government of Ireland (2019) Update Workforce Development Plan for the ELC/SAC Sector.

On successful completion of the programme graduates will obtain a Bachelor of Education (Honours) in Early Childhood Education.	
Target learner groups	
This programme is aimed at learners wishing to undertake a Bachelor of Education (Honours) in Early Childhood Education. It is particularly aimed at learners for whom a more flexible blended delivery method suits their personal circumstances. Hibernia College has purposefully created this BEd. programme to attract learners from the current TUSLA registered ELC sector and who already hold a level 5, 6 or 7 in a cognate area such as Early Childhood Education and Care.	
Approved countries for provision	Ireland
Delivery mode: Full-time/Part-time	Full time programme only.
The teaching and learning modalities	Average of 23 hours/week to include online content engagement, online tutorials and a face to face day once a fortnight.

Summary of specifications for teaching staff		
Role	Profile	WTE
Programme Lead	Doctoral qualification (NFQ 10) Proven experience in the sector/equivalent. Experience in Higher Education desirable. Evidence of engagement in research and publication of research desirable.	1.0
Research Lead	Doctoral qualification (NFQ 10) in a cognate area Proven experience in the sector/equivalent. Experience in Higher Education desirable. Evidence of engagement in research and publication of research desirable.	0.5
Prof. Practice Lead	Level 9 qualification in a cognate area Proven experience in the sector/equivalent. Experience in Higher Education desirable. Evidence of engagement in research and publication of research desirable	1.0
Module Lead	Masters in Education/PhD in Education/equivalent desirable	0.25
Research supervisors	Masters in Education/PhD in Education/equivalent desirable	0.25
Practice Placement Assessors	Masters in Education equivalent desirable	0.25
Access and Student Liaison Officer	Bachelor Degree (NQT Level 8) Experience in administration Higher Education and Training desirable	0.5

Programme Administrator	Bachelor Degree (NQT level 7))	1.0
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Learning Activity	Ratio of learners to teaching staff
Asynchronous Online Lecture	1:60
Discussion Forum	1:60
Face to Face	1:15
Professional Practice Placement	1:10
Synchronous Online Lecture	1:60
Synchronous tutorial	1:15

Panel Commentary on programme outline and staffing: The panel is satisfied with the programme outline and staffing requirements as described. The programme will provide a flexible opportunity for those already working in the ELC sector to gain a level 8 qualification and further develop their existing skills. The panel has some concern that some sectors may be disqualified from entering the programme e.g. school leavers or that progression may be hindered by the entry requirements to the programme. ***The panel therefore recommends that Hibernia College reviews the entry requirements of the programme so that they are consistent with national entry requirements at level 8 and access, transfer and progression (ATP) policy.*** As outlined above, the panel ***recommends that the staffing of the programme is monitored to ensure that the ratios outlined above are maintained as enrolment grows.***

Programmes being replaced (applicable to applications for revalidation)		
Code	Title	Last enrolment date
N/A	N/A	N/A

Section D. Other noteworthy features of the application

Part 1A Evaluation of the Case for an Extension of the Approved Scope of Provision (where applicable). Having examined appropriate QA / Governance procedures, comment on the case for extending the applicant's Approved Scope of Provision to enable provision of this programme. (Especially relevant for move to online delivery / assessment)

Not applicable in this case

Part 2. Evaluation against the validation criteria

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

<p>a) The provider meets the prerequisites (section 44(7) of the 2012 Act) to apply for validation of the programme.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>c) The provider has declared that their programme complies with applicable statutory, regulatory and professional body requirements.¹</p>		
	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Principal Programme	Yes	The Panel has evaluated the principal programme having regard to the criterion and sub-criteria and recommends that QQI can be satisfied that the programme meets this criterion.

¹This 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.

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

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The programme aims and objectives are expressed plainly. b) A QQI award is specified for those who complete the programme. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Where applicable, a QQI award is specified for each embedded programme. c) There is a satisfactory rationale for the choice of QQI award(s). d) The award title(s) is consistent with unit 3.1 of QQI's <i>Policy and Criteria for Making Awards</i>. e) The award title(s) is otherwise legitimate for example it must comply with applicable statutory, regulatory and professional body requirements. f) The programme title and any embedded programme titles are <ul 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. g) For each programme and embedded programme <ul 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.² (ii) The minimum intended programme learning outcomes to qualify for the QQI award sought are consistent with the relevant QQI awards standards. h) Where applicable, the minimum intended module learning outcomes are explicitly specified for each of the programme's modules. i) Any QQI minor awards sought for those who complete the modules are specified, where applicable. <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.³</p>

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

The panel heard that the objective of this programme is to retain people in the early years sector and to develop pathways for practitioners in the entirety of the sector rather than being restricted to early years settings. The award of Bachelor of Education is chosen as the programme builds on the identity of the educator and the relationship between the educator and child. The programme deliberately focusses on children aged 0-8 using the WHO and OECD definitions of early childhood.

This programme's minimum intended programme learning outcomes (MILPOs) have been aligned to the QQI 2019 Professional Award-type Descriptors at NFQ Levels 5 to 8: Annotated for QQI Early Learning and Care (ELC) Awards, the QQI 2014 Awards Standards - Generic Higher Education and Training and the Department of Education and Skills (2019) Professional Award Criteria and Guidelines for Initial Professional Learning (Level 7 & 8) Degree Programmes for the Early Learning and Care (ELC) Sector in Ireland. The objectives of the programme are clearly laid out and the award title of Bachelor of Education is consistent with QQI's Policy and Criteria for making awards.

² Other programme objectives, for example, may be to meet the educational or training requirements of a statutory, regulatory or professional body.

³ 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 with the objectives of the programme and that its learning outcomes are clearly specified.

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.⁴
- 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 evidence⁵ of learner demand for the programme.
 - (v) There is evidence of employment opportunities for graduates where relevant⁶.
 - (vi) The programme meets genuine education and training needs.⁷
- 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
Principal Programme	Yes	The Panel has evaluated the principal programme having regard to the criterion and sub-criteria and recommends that QQI can be satisfied that the programme meets this criterion.

Hibernia College’s rationale for the development of the programme is outlined *in section 3* of the programme validation document. The programme was developed by Hibernia College in response to a growing need within the ELC sector for a highly qualified professionalised, graduate led workforce. An analysis of and comparison with programmes already in the market was provided. Hibernia College worked with sectoral experts as well as getting feedback from 172 owner/managers of early

⁴ 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.

⁵ This might be predictive or indirect.

⁶ It is essential to involve employers in the programme development and review process when the programme is vocationally or professionally oriented.

⁷ 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.

years centres. The panel is satisfied that the programme development has taken account of stakeholders and that networks and relationships are being developed.

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 satisfied⁸.
- 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 (CEFR⁹) 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):
 - (i) Reflects the core *intended programme learning outcomes* and is consistent with the standards and purposes of the QQI awards to which it leads, the award title(s) and their class(es).
 - (ii) Is learner focused and meaningful to the learners;
 - (iii) Has long-lasting significance.
- g) The programme title is otherwise legitimate; for example, it must comply with applicable statutory, regulatory and professional body requirements.

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

The sources of programme information available to prospective and current learners is clearly outlined in Section 4 of the programme validation document. The programme’s target learners are those already working in the early years education sector, primarily in sessional early years education.

The panel has some concerns that the entry requirements of the programme are not consistent with national entry requirements for level 8 degree programmes or with access, transfer and progression policy. The programme team put forward an argument for a minimum entry requirement of 3 years'

⁸ 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

⁹ http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Framework_EN.pdf (accessed 26/09/2015)

work experience in the sector and a level 5 Certificate in Childcare prior to entering stage 1 of the programme. Although understanding the programme team's motives to ensure that those accessing the programme are committed to the ELC sector, in the opinion of the panel, this entry requirement hinders access to some sectors such as school leavers and puts an additional experiential burden on staff currently working in the sector. ***Therefore, the panel recommends that Hibernia College reviews the entry requirements to the programme to ensure that they are consistent with national entry requirements for level 8 awards and with access, transfer and progression policy.***

The programme team has not proposed exit awards for the programme. While again understanding the rationale for this to promote programme completion, the panel is of the view that given the target learner and sector, the availability of exit awards would provide additional transfer and progression routes to the learner as they negotiate the requirements of full-time work and full-time education. Promotion and the payment of capitation fees are also related to achievement of awards at different levels of the framework. ***Therefore, the panel recommends that Hibernia College develops exit awards at Stage 2 and Stage 3 of the programme.***

Criterion 5. The programme’s written curriculum is well structured and fit-for-purpose

<p>a) The programme is suitably structured and coherently oriented towards the achievement by learners of its intended programme learning outcomes. The programme (including any stages and modules) is integrated in all its dimensions.</p> <p>b) In so far as it is feasible the programme provides choice to enrolled learners so that they may align their learning opportunities towards their individual educational and training needs.</p> <p>c) Each module and stage is suitably structured and coherently oriented towards the achievement by learners of the intended <i>programme</i> learning outcomes.</p> <p>d) The objectives and purposes of each of the programme’s elements are clear to learners and to the provider’s staff.</p> <p>e) The programme is structured and scheduled realistically based on sound educational and training principles¹⁰.</p> <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.¹¹</p>		
	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Principal Programme	Partially	The Panel has evaluated the principal programme having regard to the criterion and sub-criteria and recommends that QQI can be satisfied that the programme partially meets this criterion

The panel is satisfied that the programme is appropriately structured and oriented towards the achievement of the programme learning outcomes. Each module descriptor (*ref programme validation document, section 6, module documentation*) outlines the indicative curriculum, how the module is developed using Hibernia College’s blended learning design model, indicative assessment and learning resources. Examples of the blended learning material were demonstrated to the panel during the meeting and these served to reassure that panel of the teaching and learning strategies used.

However, the panel is not satisfied that the placement practice modules are sufficiently documented in order to provide assurance to learners or placement providers that they can be appropriately managed. As the learner is required to be working in a Tusla registered early years’ service, the boundaries of the workplace and the learning environment are unclear. It was unclear to the panel how learners would access placement settings outside of their place of employment, how relationships between peer mentors and learners as employees might be managed, or how arrangements for observation and assessment would be practically managed in an early years’ setting. While a student placement handbook and sample memorandum of understanding with

¹⁰ 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.

¹¹ If the duration is variable, for example, when advanced entry is available, this should be explained and justified

Hibernia College and a placement tutor were provided the panel, the handbook and memorandum of agreement with placement providers was yet to be developed. **The panel therefore proposes as a special condition of validation that the structure, management and operation of the placement practice modules are fully documented.** In ensuring that learners are exposed to settings outside of their place of employment, the **panel recommends that learners experience a placement in more than one setting.** The panel also **recommends that a memorandum of agreement with placement providers and handbook for providers is provided prior to the commencement of the programme.**

In reviewing each of the modules that contribute to the programme, the panel is satisfied with their content and assessment. **The panel however, recommends that the language of the programme and curriculum should be reviewed to ensure that the vocabulary reflects early years' education and care rather than that of the school setting.**

The programme has some elective choices in stage 4 which may be extended over time. Electives are chosen in stage 3 of the programme and confirmed subject to minimum and maximum numbers at the commencement of stage 4.

With specific reference to the module ECE401 Research Practice in Theory, the panel was unclear if this capstone 20 ECTS module was an individual or group assignment. The panel heard that while the learners worked in groups that the assessed artefact was an individual assessment. The panel **recommends that the assessment for this module is clarified as an individual assessment as outlined at the meeting.**

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

<p>a) The specification of the programme’s staffing requirements (staff required as part of the programme and intrinsic to it) is precise, and rigorous and consistent with the programme and its defined purpose. The specifications include professional and educational qualifications, licences-to practise where applicable, experience and the staff/learner ratio requirements. See also criterion 12 c).</p> <p>b) The programme has an identified complement of staff¹² (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 development¹³ opportunities¹⁴.</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
Principal Programme	Yes	The Panel has evaluated the principal programme having regard to the criterion and sub-criteria and recommends that QQI can be satisfied that the programme meets this criterion

The panel is satisfied that Hibernia College has identified a complement of staff and potential staff to provide the programme. The panel heard that academic staff will be qualified to level 9 and above with experience in early years education and care. Practice tutors will be required to have level 8 qualifications in early years education or significant experience in the sector. Peer mentors will be provided with orientation and support through mentoring and summer courses. This is mandatory and will be supported by a Hibernia College liaison person.

Section 7 of the programme validation document outlines the recruitment, staff development and monitoring policies of Hibernia College as they will apply to this programme. The programme is also supported by a Digital Learning Department.

¹² 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.

¹³ 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.

¹⁴ 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.

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

<p>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).</p> <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
Principal Programme	Yes	The Panel has evaluated the principal programme having regard to the criterion and sub-criteria and recommends that QQI can be satisfied that the programme meets this criterion

Although the panel did not visit any physical resources, the panel is satisfied that Hibernia College has the appropriate resources to deliver the programme as documented in Section 8 of the programme validation document. The panel heard of Hibernia College’s significant experience in delivering blended programmes and of its record in managing its learning platform. There are policies in place to assure the stability of the platform and for the selection of off-campus locations for face to face delivery.

Criterion 8. The learning environment is consistent with the needs of the programme’s learners

<p>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.</p> <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
Principal Programme	Yes	The Panel has evaluated the principal programme having regard to the criterion and sub-criteria and recommends that QQI can be satisfied that the programme meets this criterion

The panel heard that communities of learning and practice are created initially through the induction and orientation processes. Although learning virtually, cohort identity is created through the use of regional tutor groups. Learners are supported through dedicated support staff. As outlined above, the panel has concerns that the boundaries between the learner's workplace and the requirements of 'practice placement' setting are not sufficiently clear and require further clarification.

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, support¹⁵ and timely formative feedback is regularly provided to enrolled learners as they progress within the programme.</p>		
	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Principal Programme	Yes	The Panel has evaluated the principal programme having regard to the criterion and sub-criteria and recommends that QQI can be satisfied that the programme meets this criterion

Section 5 of the programme validation document provides a detailed description of the programme teaching and learning strategy and approach. A demonstration of how this is implemented was

¹⁵ 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.

provided to the panel. The panel was impressed by the spiral approach to curriculum design and inclusive nature of the programme. Academic writing skills are supported through the digital learning platform and by the library service. Although the programme allows for the recruitment of international students and may have students for whom English is not a first language enrolled, there are no specific additional English language support programmes currently available.

Criterion 10. There are sound assessment strategies

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) All assessment is undertaken consistently with <i>Assessment Guidelines, Conventions and Protocols for Programmes Leading to QQI Awards</i>¹⁶ 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.¹⁷ 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.¹⁸ f) Sample assessment instruments, tasks, marking schemes and related evidence have been provided for each award-stage assessment and indicate that the assessment is likely to be valid and reliable. g) There are sound procedures for the moderation of summative assessment results. h) The provider only puts forward an enrolled learner for certification for a particular award for which a programme has been validated if they have been specifically assessed against the standard for that award.¹⁹ 		
	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Principal Programme	Yes	The Panel has evaluated the principal programme having regard to the criterion and sub-criteria and recommends that QQI can be satisfied that the programme meets this criterion

The panel notes that assessment for all four stages is through coursework and that there are no terminal examinations. The programme assessment strategy detailed in *section 5.10* of the programme validation document uses both formative and summative assessment. In commending the programme team on the use of innovate assessment methods, the **panel also recommends the provision of an assessment schedule including formative and summative assessment so that it is clear to learners when assessments are due.** Sample assessments were provided in *Appendix 4* to the programme validation document which provided some reassurance to the panel regarding the information that would be available to learners that is not included in the module descriptor.

The panel heard that an agreement is made between the assessor, peer mentor and student with regard to the content of the assessment visit. Members of the panel had some concerns as to the

¹⁶ See the section on transitional arrangements.

¹⁷ This assumes the minimum intended programme/module learning outcomes are consistent with the applicable awards standards.

¹⁸ 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.

¹⁹ 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).

practicalities as to how this would be achieved. As outlined above the panel proposes as a condition of validation that the detail of how the learner will be assessed in the workplace/placement setting should be clearly documented.

Assessment of the programme is governed by the Policy for Assessment, Grading and Certification and number of procedures. The practice placement modules 1,2,3,4a & 4b and Research Methods in Practice modules are excluded from the pass by compensation regulation.

The award is classified using 30% of the overall average in stage 3 and 70% of the overall average in Stage 4.

The panel recommends that the modules excluded from the pass by compensation regulation, and the basis on which is award is calculated, are documented in the special regulations section of the programme schedule and made clear to learners in student information. The panel also recommends that the impact of the implementation of Sectoral Convention 3 on the Determination of Award Classification is clearly outlined in the programme assessment regulations.

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

<p>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.</p> <p>b) Information is provided about learner supports that are available to learners enrolled on the programme.</p> <p>c) Specific information is provided to learners enrolled on the programme about any programme-specific appeals and complaints procedures.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>g) The programme provides supports for enrolled learners who have special education and training needs.</p> <p>h) The programme makes reasonable accommodations for learners with disabilities²⁰.</p> <p>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>²¹ 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.</p> <p>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).</p>		
	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Principal Programme	Yes	The Panel has evaluated the principal programme having regard to the criterion and sub-criteria and recommends that QQI can be satisfied that the programme meets this criterion.

The panel is satisfied that learners on the programme will be well cared for. A range of support services are provided as well as a 3-week online orientation to the programme and the technology used in its delivery. Students are provided with a placement handbook. While the programme is designed using Universal Design for Learning, the programme is also supported by policies for reasonable accommodation and for student support. The panel also heard that a Fitness to Practice policy is currently in development. Given the nature of the programme and the settings of the placements involved, the panel **recommends that the fitness to practice policy is implemented prior to the programme commencement.**

²⁰ 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).

²¹ See Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes to International Students (QQI, 2015)

Criterion 12. The programme is well managed

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 assurance²² is intrinsic to the programme’s maintenance arrangements and addresses all aspects highlighted by the validation criteria. f) The programme-specific quality assurance arrangements are consistent with QQI’s statutory QA guidelines and use continually monitored completion rates and other sources of information that may provide insight into the quality and standards achieved. g) The programme operation and management arrangements are coherently documented and suitable. h) There are sound procedures for interface with QQI certification. 		
	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Principal Programme	Yes	The Panel has evaluated the principal programme having regard to the criterion and sub-criteria and recommends that QQI can be satisfied that the programme meets this criterion

As outlined in the programme validation submission (Section 9), the programme will be managed by a programme board. All members of teaching staff will be members of the programme board. The Academic Board has oversight of academic matters and the programme quality assurance is governed by Hibernia College quality assurance framework.

²² See also QQI’s Policy on Monitoring (QQI, 2014)

Part 3. Overall recommendation to QQI

3.1 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;
X	Satisfactory subject to proposed special conditions (specified with timescale for compliance for each condition; these may include proposed pre-validation conditions i.e. proposed (minor) things to be done to a programme that almost fully meets the validation criteria before QQI makes a determination);
	Not satisfactory.

Reasons for the overall recommendation

1. This report documents throughout how this application for programme validation has met each of the criteria for validation. A proposal is made for a special condition of validation where a criterion was found to be partially met. Recommendations for enhancement to the programme are also provided where the panel found areas for improvement of the documentation.

Commendations

1. The panel wishes to commend the programme team and staff of Hibernia College for their engagement with the process, particularly in the challenging context of a virtual meeting.
2. The panel wishes to commend the use of the spiral curriculum.
3. The panel wishes to commend the use of reflective practice and the objective of the development of critical reflective practitioners.
4. The panel wishes to commend the breadth of assessment methods used.
5. The panel wishes to commend the focus on children's rights within the programme.

Special Conditions of Validation (directive and with timescale for compliance)

1. That the structure, management and operations of the practice placement modules are clearly documented so that they are understood by learners and placement providers. This should be completed by August 31st 2020.

Summary of recommended special conditions of validation

None.

Summary of recommendations to the provider

The panel recommends the following:

- 1 that Hibernia College reviews the entry requirements to the programme to ensure that they are consistent with national entry requirements for level 8 awards and with access, transfer and progression policy.
- 2 that Hibernia College develops exit awards at Stage 2 and Stage 3 of the programme.
- 3 that students experience a placement in more than 1 setting.
- 4 that a memorandum of agreement with placement providers and handbook for providers is provided prior to the commencement of the programme.
- 5 that the language of the programme and curriculum should be reviewed to ensure that the vocabulary reflects early years education and care rather than that of the school setting
- 6 that the assessment for ECE401 Research Theory in Practice is clarified as an individual assessment.
- 7 that an assessment schedule is provided, including formative and summative assessment, so that it is clear to learners when assessments are due
- 8 that the modules excluded from the pass by compensation regulation, and the basis on which is award is calculated, are documented in the special regulations section of the programme schedule and made clear to learners in student information
- 9 that the impact of the implementation of Sectoral Convention 3 on the Determination of Award Classification is clearly outlined in the programme assessment regulations
- 10 that the fitness to practice policy is implemented prior to the programme commencement.

Declarations of Evaluators' Interests

None.

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

Panel chairperson: Terry Twomey

Date: 20th July 2020

Signed:



3.2 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.

Proposed programme schedules