



**Independent Programme Review Report
For
The Advanced Certificate in Accounting (LEVEL 6)
Accounting Technician Apprenticeship**

Professional, Practical, Proven

www.AccountingTechniciansIreland.ie



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1. Introduction

The objective of this Independent Programme Review is to evaluate the apprenticeship programme that has been put forward by Accounting Technicians Ireland (hereafter ATI) for revalidation. The Independent Review Panel has evaluated the programme's implementation since its initial validation in 2017, in light of the programme team's experience of providing the programme. The panel's findings are documented in this Independent Programme Review Report.

N.B. Within this report, an Independent Evaluation Report (IER) is included as an Appendix. This documents the panel's evaluation of the programme as it is proposed for the next validation period.

The Terms of Reference for the Independent Programme Review are as follows:

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

2. Panel Membership

Name	Programme review function	Affiliations
Jack O'Herlihy Chair	Chairperson	Retired Head of Development in Letterkenny IT
Dr Catherine Peck	Secretary	Independent Education Consultant
Prof. Pauline Weetman	QA/Subject Matter Expert	Accountancy Programmes Emeritus Prof. of Accounting University of Edinburgh Business School
Dr David McCarthy	QA/Subject Matter Expert	Quality Assurance, National College of Ireland
Dr Eoin Lanigan	QA/Subject Matter Expert	Head of School Accounting and Finance, City Campus TU Dublin
Katie Haverty	Student Representative	Apprentice, National Gallery of Ireland
Alex Keys	Observer	QQI Apprenticeship QA Manager

3. Evidence Presented to the Panel

- 1) Accounting Technician Apprenticeship Revalidation Manual
- 2) Accounting Technician Apprenticeship Revalidation Report
- 3) Accounting Technician Apprenticeship Sample Training Plans & Assessment Book
- 4) Accounting Technicians Ireland Quality Assurance Manual
- 5) Further evidential material provided via a shared file

4. The Independent Review Process

The independent review process entails several distinct stages of engagement by the panel. The first stage required panel members to undertake a thorough review of the documentation provided by ATI, and discuss initial observations emerging from that review prior to meeting directly with ATI representatives.

The second stage of the process entailed the panel members making a site visit to ATI. This occurred on February 26th, 2020. The full day site visit involved interviews with ATI's management, as well as academic staff involved in programme review, design and delivery. Employer representatives and Programme Managers at two of the colleges where the classroom based component of the programme is delivered were also available, and were interviewed with regard to those aspects of the programme relevant to their involvement and experience. Private meetings of the panel were held throughout the day. These provided the panel with the opportunity to consolidate their views in relation to ATI's process of programmatic review, and the impact of the review on the modified programme proposed for revalidation.

The site visit concluded with feedback delivered verbally by the panel to ATI's Chief Operations Officer and Apprenticeship Director on the panel's interim findings and an agreement by the panel to adjourn for a period of up to six weeks. This occurred due a consensus among the panel members that additional work was required on the documentation. ATI's programmatic review documentation contained a significant amount of useful data, which was presented well and succinctly. However, this data was not adequately supported by commentary or analysis that made clear how ATI was using the information. Although substantive changes had been made to the apprenticeship programme as an outcome of the review, these were not systematically or comprehensively identified. Nor were they presented in a manner that ensured the rationale for each change was transparent. Applications for revalidation must explain why changes to the programme are being proposed.

During the site visit, the panel explored this concern with ATI's representatives. Specifically, the panel sought to understand to what extent the changes proposed were grounded within a consideration of learning from the initial programme delivery period, and responded to the data and evidence the programme team had collated for the review. ATI's programme team were able to provide clear and detailed responses to many of the panel's questions. The panel was therefore of the view that, in practice, many of the proposed changes represented well-reasoned responses by ATI to the evidence under consideration.

However, because the additional information conveyed during discussions at the site visit was substantial, and, in many instances, critical to the evaluation process, the panel agreed to adjourn.

During this stage of the process, within a specified period, ATI was requested to address the current gaps in its documentation and additionally resolve two discrete issues. These points were highlighted during feedback delivered verbally by the panel to ATI's Chief Operations Officer and Apprenticeship Director at the conclusion of the February 26th site visit, and also issued in writing in an interim statement. They are summarised below:

Gaps in the documentation to be addressed/issues to be resolved by ATI:

1. *ATI must rewrite Section 7 of the current programme report. The revision should present a clear tracking of each change to the programme. For each of those changes, the underlying rationale and the process followed to implement the change should be summarised. An indicative (not exhaustive) list of areas to be addressed include:*
 - *Analysis of the outcomes of the SWOT analyses presented on pages 64 and 74, and commentary on how the identified weaknesses will be addressed*
 - *Analysis of the tables of data presented in the Programme Review Report Template section 3 (Baseline qualitative and quantitative information on the programme being reviewed) and commentary on reflection and actions taken as a result*
 - *Inclusion of a rationale for the increase in credit weighting*
 - *Inclusion of a rationale for the decision to identify a capstone (if maintained, see point 3)*
 - *Inclusion of a rationale for changes to entry requirements (i.e. the reduction from 310 to 300 points)*
 - *Inclusion of the processes for, and examples of, remedial action taken where college programme managers are underperforming (potentially also to be included within the QA Manual)*
2. *ATI must review its Minimum Intended Programme Learning Outcomes (MIPLOs) and their presentation within the documentation to ensure the following:*
 - *The MIPLOs from the current iteration of the programme and the revised MIPLOs for the programme proposed for revalidation should be presented side by side in a tabular format for ease of comparison. This should be accompanied by some commentary on the rationale for any changes.*
 - *The wording of the MIPLOs for the programme proposed for revalidation should be revised to ensure that their attainment can be clearly evidenced through assessed student work.*
 - *Within the documentation, precisely identify and map where achievement of MIPLOs is demonstrated (i.e., within which module, and through which piece of assessment can a student demonstrate that they have achieved this MIPLO). On this point, ATI is advised that current mapping appears to have overrepresented transversal/soft skills across the programme, and that it is sufficient that a MIPLO relating to such a skill is achieved and evidenced in only one or two modules.*

3. *With regard to Module 8, ATI is advised that the term capstone connotes a particular meaning. This meaning is not reflected in the current module descriptor, nor was it reflected in the responses of ATI's representatives to the panel during the site visit. The panel has identified that ATI must either remove the use of this term from the documentation and module descriptor, or otherwise comprehensively review the module structure to ensure it functions as a capstone is intended to. The panel offers some additional advice to ATI in relation to this requirement. The panel is of the view that a capstone is unnecessary at NFQ Level 6. Further, integration of learning in the module remains possible without denoting it as a capstone. Integration of learning, if it remains an aim of the module, could be retained and expressed more clearly in the module descriptor.*
4. *With regard to work-based learning, which is now weighted in assessment, ATI must update its QA Manual (specifically, Section 6: Assessment of Apprentice Achievement). This must represent the QA processes that will facilitate this change, including those for internal and external moderation of work-based learning assessments.*

ATI submitted evidence that it had attended to the panel's requests to the panel on March 9th 2020, which was subsequently reviewed and evaluated by the panel members. The panel found that ATI had sufficiently addressed the panel's concerns, though not with equal depth in each instance.

Specifically:

- ATI sufficiently contextualised the SWOT analysis, providing a succinct and clear commentary on this and outlining key enhancement activities in the self-assessment evaluation. The panel notes that it would expect to see an assurance within the report that the implementation of the enhancement roadmap will be monitored and reported regularly to the programme board.
- ATI presented an analysis of some baseline data. However, there was limited evidence in the report to indicate how ATI was addressing negative trends in particular provider colleges. Processes of this have not been clearly identified.
- ATI provided a sufficient rationale for changes made to the programme in relation to credit weighting and minimum entry requirements.
- ATI removed the use of the term capstone from its module documentation. However, the panel notes that it remains unclear from the documentation whether integration of learning is to be an aim of Financial Data Management, and how this would be achieved.

- ATI has revised the phrasing of particular MIPLOs and MIPLOs representing transversal skills are no longer overrepresented in the module documentation. However, a comparative table of MIPLOs should be included in Section 7 of the revalidation report, and this is not visible.
- ATI has more fully described this within the revised documentation, and provided a workflow of procedures concerning the moderation of work-based assessment.

The final stage of the process involves the production of the Independent Programme Review Report. Although the report is drafted by the panel secretary, the report is closely reviewed and commented on by the panel members to ensure it is fully representative of dialogue between the provider and panel on the day of the site visit, and of the panel's views overall. The panel chair is responsible for sign off on this report. The contents of this report therefore reflect a consensus achieved by the panel and the panel's collective findings and recommendations.

5. The Provider's Programme Review Report

5.1 Applications for the Programme

ATI's Programme Review Report presents baseline quantitative data for applications and enrolments in its review documentation. This includes application data from September 2017 – January 2020 (5 intakes in total), and is broken down by gender, age range and learner type (leaving cert, school leaver or mature learner). These figures show a fairly even distribution by gender across the two January intakes, and approximately 30% more applications from females across the three September intakes. Age ranges are distributed from 17 – 60+, with the largest numbers of applications coming from prospective learners between 20 – 29 years of age. The majority of applicants are classes as mature learners, although ATI notes that the percentage of school leavers applying to take the apprenticeship has increased steadily each year.

ATI's review of the data reflects that approximately 50% of applicants progress from the application stage to the employer review stage. However, during the latter stage a 25% drop is observed. This has indicated to ATI that there is a need to adjust the application process to screen for ineligible applicants more efficiently. A further 25% drop between the telephone interview stage and employer review stage has been interpreted by ATI as indicating a potential inefficiency, in that applicants are not adequately prepared for the telephone interview. These processes are the focus of actions being considered within a continuous improvement plan to mitigate the progression drop across these application stages.

5.2 Enrolment on Programme

ATI's review of fluctuations in enrolment figures across the 7 colleges where the programme is delivered have indicated that Bray and Blackrock are competing for the same learners, leading ATI to consider whether these enrolments should be consolidated at one college moving forward. Small enrolment numbers in Waterford and Limerick are noted to be a concern, though analysis of why this may be the case is somewhat lacking. Actions taken to respond to low enrolments in 2017 at Monaghan Institute that have resulted in steady growth are perhaps illustrative of steps that ATI could consider in relation to these regions. Strong numbers in Cork are attributed to employer interest in the programme in that region, which is also indicative of a potential strategy ATI might consider.

5.3 Attrition, transfer, progression and completion

ATI has presented data reflecting that outright withdrawal rates at Stage 1 (excluding transfers, deferrals and temporary suspension of studies) was 8% for the September 2017 intake and 11% for the September 2018 intake. Although comparative data is not provided, ATI note that this is significantly lower than withdrawal rates for the traditional ATI diploma and other further and higher education programmes. Stage 2 data is limited to the September 2017 intake, and is 16%. Graduate samples are necessarily limited as thus far only one intake has graduated, with an overall attrition of 29% for the entire lifecycle of the programme. Although it remains too early to calculate progression, a graduate survey indicates that 95% of respondents intend to progress to further studies.

ATI acknowledges that its current processes for tracking in this area may not be sufficient to deal with increased numbers, as it involves manual update of various databases. A heavy dependence on manual processes and reporting is identified as a weakness within the SWOT analysis ATI presents in the review report. Responding to this concern, ATI confirmed during the site visit that a review of processes to maximise efficiencies is underway, and automatic reporting systems are being developed. New categories will be created to track early withdrawal, transfer and withdrawal. Additionally, ATI states that it is actively working to reduce the already low attrition rates by ensuring apprentices are better informed regarding workload and commitment prior to commencing.

5.4 Benchmarking

ATI has presented details of the apprentices' performance compared to national performance on exams in 2018 and 2019. This is consistently strong across all areas and reflects well on the programme. ATI acknowledges that this may in part be due to screening of candidates entering the programme, but note that this is potentially also attributable to the complementary benefits of concurrent 'on the job' and 'off the job' training and education.

Notably, the breakdown of pass rates, completion of work-based assignments and completion of the first year programme reflects some variance between the colleges where the programme is delivered. During the site visit, the panel asked ATI's representatives to elaborate on the actions taken by ATI to address instances of underperformance within a particular college.

5.5 Reputation and stakeholder views

The programme report outlines a number of mechanisms used by ATI to capture feedback on the programme, including annual College QA visits and Employer QA visits by members of the ATA team, Programme Board meetings and meetings of the Consortium Steering Group. The programme holds four student forums annually, attended by one representative from each class. Additionally external examiner reports provide a mechanism for feedback on the programme's assessment strategy. AIT has identified a weakness pertaining to this within its SWOT analysis, noting that moving forward the voice of the apprentice needs to be more explicit in self-evaluation, monitoring and review processes. However, within the report presented ATI states that learner feedback has informed the proposed change in weighting and grading of work-based tasks in the new programme.

It is clear that ATI apprentices are performing above national averages on exams, employer feedback is positive and a high percentage of graduates thus far have been offered continuing employment. The panel is therefore of the view that the programme is fit for purpose and appropriately aligned to the skills profile, producing graduates of the programme in possession of appropriate technical and discipline specific knowledge, skills and competences.

5.6 Implications for the revised programme

ATI's programme review report identifies that entry requirements for the new programme have been revised to reduce the required Leaving Certificate points for school leavers to 300 from 310. ATI notes that this responds directly to feedback from employers and lecturers, and that 300 points is considered an appropriate level based on the academic strength required of apprentices at the start of the programme, and stakeholder experience of the programme so far.

Additionally, ATI have adjusted the ECTS and allocated learning hours in response to feedback from apprentices and employers. Feedback from both groups highlighted that the independent learning hours required for successful completion of the programme on the job had not been recognised. During the site visit, the panel explored this issue further with ATI's representatives, who noted that this more fairly represented the nature of on the job learning, which stretches across 52 weeks of the year. The initial allocation has been made on the basis of a more traditional semester-based calendar.

With regard to work-based tasks ATI presents consistent feedback from students, workplace mentors and employers regarding the work-based tasks indicating these could usefully be assessed and contribute toward the final marks allocated in several modules. During the site visit the panel members met with employer representatives who confirmed this perspective.

6. Summary of Findings of the Panel

The panel is satisfied overall that ATI's review of the Accounting Technicians Apprenticeship programme has taken into account appropriate data and the feedback of multiple stakeholders. The new programme, discussed in the IER attached to this report meets the spirit and criteria for continued QQI approval.

However, the panel is of the view that ATI needs to give care and attention to ensuring that its ambitions for the programme are supported by documented evidence and analysis of that evidence as it moves forward. Future programme review reports for the programme should include thorough analysis and discussion of the programme data from the outset, and modifications to the programme should be clearly linked to this.

Appendix I – Site Visit Agenda

QQI REVALIDATION

INDEPENDENT PANEL MEETING

Wednesday, 26 February 2020
Accounting Technicians Ireland
2nd Floor, CA House, 47-49 Pearse Street, Dublin 2

AGENDA

08.30 **Private Session** **Aran Room**

Panel members arrive. Meet & greet private panel
Danish, Tea/Coffee on arrival

10:00 **Presentation by Coordinating Provider**

Meeting with programme leadership team
Focus: an overview of the apprenticeship programme (20 min) followed by Q&A
Criteria to be discussed:

12	The Programme is well-managed
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11:00 **Tea / Coffee**

11:15 **Programme: Concept to Delivery**

Criteria to be discussed: 2,3,4,5

2	The Programme is consistent with the QQI award sought
3	Well-informed and soundly based
4	Access, transfer & progression
5	Curriculum is well-structured and fit-for-purpose

12:30 **Private Panel Meeting**

Lunch

ATI Boardroom

1:30 **Programme: Staffing & Environment**

Criteria to be discussed: 6,7,8

6	Staff is qualified and capable
7	Physical resources
8	Learning environment

2:30 **Programme: Assessment**

Criteria to be discussed: 9,10

9	Teaching & Learning strategies
10	Sound assessment strategies

3:30 **Private Panel Meeting**

Tea / Coffee

4:00 **The Learner Journey**

Criteria to be discussed: 8,11,12

8	Learning environment
11	Learners are well informed, guided & cared for
12	Programme is well managed

5:00 **Private Panel Meeting**

6:15 **Meeting Concludes**

Appendix II - Persons Met

Name	Role
Dr Shira Mehlmann	Chair of Programme Boards (ROI & NI), Member of Education Board
Ms Jennifer Kelly	Employer, Mazars, Member of CSG, Programme Review Board and Education Board
Ms Gillian Doherty	ATI, Chief Operations Officer
Ms Gabriela Airini	ATI, Apprenticeship Programme Director
Ms Aoife Kennedy	ATI, Apprenticeship Programme Manager
Mr Mike Burger	ATI, Head of Education
Sandra Gleeson	Employer, Grant Thornton, Member of Programme Review Board
Mr Daniel Philips	ATI, Recruitment Executive
Ms Brid Longe	ATI, Assessment Lead
Mr Barry Smith	Lecturer, Educational Technologist, Subject Matter Expert, Syllabus Reviewer
Ms Collette Yates	Chief Moderator
Mr Kieran Alcock	Lecturer, Rathmines College Programme Manager, Member of Programme Board
Mr Jack Carroll	Lecturer, Bray College Programme Manager

Appendix III – Independent Evaluation Report



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 name	Accounting Technicians Ireland
Date of site visit	26 th February, 2020
Date of report	16/03/2020

Overall recommendations

Principal programme	Title	Accounting Technician Apprenticeship Programme
	Award	Advanced Certificate in Accounting QQI Level 6
	Credit	
	Recommendation <i>Satisfactory OR Satisfactory subject to proposed conditions OR Not Satisfactory</i>	Satisfactory

Evaluators

Evaluators		
Name	Role	Affiliation
Jack O'Herlihy Chair	Chairperson	Retired Head of Development in Letterkenny IT
Dr Catherine Peck	Secretary	Independent Education Consultant
Prof. Pauline Weetman	QA/Subject Matter Expert	Accountancy Programmes Emeritus Prof. of Accounting University of Edinburgh Business School
Dr David McCarthy	QA/Subject Matter Expert	Quality Assurance, National College of Ireland
Dr Eoin Lanigan	QA/Subject Matter Expert	Head of School Accounting and Finance, City Campus TU Dublin
Katie Haverty	Student Representative	Apprentice, National Gallery of Ireland
Alex Keys	Observer	QQI Apprenticeship QA Manager

Principal Programme

Names of centres where the programmes are to be provided	Maximum number of learners (<i>per centre</i>)	Minimum number of learners
Cork College of Commerce	30	7
ATI Academy, Dublin	30	7
Blackrock College of Further Education, Dublin	30	7
Bray College of Further Education	30	7
Waterford College of Further Education	30	7
Colaiste Ide, Dublin	30	7
Rathmines College of Further Education, Dublin	30	7
Galway Technical Institute	30	7
Limerick College of Further Education	30	7
Monaghan Institute	30	7
O'Fiaich Institute of Further Education Dundalk	30	7
Other colleges will be added every year as the programme expands nationwide. ATI has a target of 20 locations delivering the apprenticeship programme nationwide		

Enrolment interval (<i>normally 5 years</i>)	Date of first intake	September 2020
	Date of last intake	September 2025
Maximum number of annual intakes	2 (January/September)	
Maximum total number of learners per intake	240	
Programme duration (months from start to completion)	2 years	
Target learner groups	<p>The target learner group is all learners who meet or exceed the minimum entry requirements as outlined below and have been accepted by an ATI and SOLAS approved employer as an employee and registered as an apprentice. For Leaving Cert students, the minimum entry requirements are 300 LC points and at least an O6 grade in English and Maths or Accountancy.</p> <p>For those who don't have the requisite LC points, a PLC course at level 5 or above will also make them eligible to apply.</p> <p>Mature learners (over 23 years of age), are also eligible to apply. If they do not have the requisite academic qualifications, a mature questionnaire will be conducted by telephone to determine their suitability for the programme.</p>	
Approved countries for provision	Republic of Ireland	
Delivery mode: Full-time/Part-time	<p>The Programme is full-time; all apprentices must be employed prior to registration. The Programme is comprised of work-based 'On- the-Job' training provided by approved employers which alternates with technical 'Off-the-Job' training provided by Collaborating Providers.</p>	
The teaching and learning modalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom lectures • Theoretical and practical delivery • Mentoring and small group tutoring • Directed eLearning hours • Self-directed work producing material for work-based tasks • Work-based learning • Simulated working environments 	
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 Accounting Technician Apprenticeship Programme is a two-year, work-based learning programme which is delivered by Accounting Technicians Ireland in partnership with local colleges. The programme is aimed at new entrants to the industry and leads to a QQI Level 6 Advanced Certificate in Accounting. The programme's concept was developed by Accounting Technicians Ireland and a Consortium Steering Group comprising professional accountancy bodies such as Chartered Accountants Ireland, qualified members of Accounting Technicians Ireland,</p>	

	<p>employers, academics and other relevant stakeholder experts.</p> <p>This apprenticeship is a system of employment focused training and education which enables a person to obtain the skills, knowledge and competencies required to perform efficiently as an Accounting Technician, to respond appropriately to technical change, and to seek progression through further education and training within the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).</p> <p>The apprenticeship programme consists of alternating elements of On-the-Job and Off-the-Job training and education. This model of training allows apprentices to integrate the knowledge and skills acquired during Off-the-Job training and education with those gained in the On-the-Job phases of training. This exposure to changing work contexts and the opportunity to further practice and develop the knowledge and skills enables apprentices to achieve the high levels of competence expected of them in the contemporary workplace.</p> <p>The structure of the apprenticeship programme ensures that the training and education delivered to apprentices are grounded in the needs of the workplace. The culture of apprenticeship learning and development prepares apprentices to be adaptable, flexible, be self-motivated and to manage change. The programme also prepares the apprentice to meet the challenges of future developments in the occupation and the workplace by equipping them with the necessary skills, knowledge and competence. The alternating training generally consists of one day Off-the-Job training and education in a local college and four days On-the-Job training in the relevant workplace. On-the-Job training takes place with the employer and is overseen by the workplace mentor. This time in employment lasts for the duration of the apprenticeship (104 weeks) and alternates with the college delivery. The Off-the-Job training takes place in ATI approved collaborating partner colleges over a 30 week period each year for a duration of two years.</p> <p>The apprentices have an appointed college mentor who ensures that the apprentice stays on track with learning and with the programme through regular review meetings with the apprentice and the workplace mentors. Part of the mentoring role is to help empower the apprentice to take responsibility for their own learning and career development.</p>
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Summary of specifications for teaching staff	WTE	Qualifications and experience
	The collaborating college provider provides the staffing requirements for the delivery of the programme based on ATI's Apprenticeship Programme documentation. The Apprenticeship Collaborating Provider Application and Academic Staff Credential forms are attached in <i>Supporting Documentation</i> .	
	Collaborating Providers (Colleges) 1 WTE per Collaborating Provider	Lecturers on the Accounting Technicians Apprenticeship Programme must hold qualifications appropriate to the Subject(s) they teach. The Credential Form requests information such as their pedagogical qualification and experience, details of professional memberships, technical qualifications and experiences, the subjects they will teach and a declaration which must be signed.
	1	Each Collaborating Provider must appoint a full-time Programme Manager for the apprenticeship programme who will oversee the delivery of the programme in the college.
	National Coordinating Provider (ATI)	Programme Director who oversees the national delivery of the apprenticeship
	1	Programme Manager who manages the operational delivery of the apprenticeship
	1	Work-based Assessment Executive
	1	Recruitment Executive
	1	Apprenticeship Executive (2020)
		Cross functional support from ATI staff in QA, Marketing, IT, Finance, Business Development, Assessment and Compliance
	Collaborating Providers (Employers)	Workplace mentors must be qualified Accounting Technicians with 5 years of experience or Accountants, and are required to complete Continuous Professional Development (CPD) in order to maintain their professional affiliation(s) and to sign the appropriate declaration which must be approved by ATI.

Summary of specifications for the ratio of learners to teaching-staff	Staff to learner ratio	Learning activity type
	1:30	Classroom based delivery
	1:10	Off-the-job College Mentor
	1:5	On-the-job Work-based Mentor
Overall WTE staff/learner ratio		

Programmes being replaced (applicable to applications for revalidation)		
Code	Title	Last enrolment date
PG23506	Advanced Certificate in Accounting	January 2020

Other noteworthy features of the application

The panel notes the following commendations to ATI on the programme.

- ATI's apprenticeship programme is clearly responsive to, and held in high regard by, employers and industry.
- ATI's apprenticeship programme meets a clear demand within the sector and among prospective learners.
- ATI's apprentices consistently achieve highly in examinations, and exceed national averages. This reflects extremely well on the programme overall.

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.	
Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	

Principal programme

The panel is satisfied that ATI is eligible to apply for revalidation of the programme.

ATI has complied with section 44(7) of the 2012 Act. ATI has established QA procedures, and presented the QA Manual for the programme to the panel alongside the programme document for evaluation. During the revalidation panel's site visit in 2020, the panel explored how specific aspects of ATI's QA would be operationalized in relation to the proposed programme (for example, in relation to the QA processes for work-based assessment). Following some amendments made by ATI during the process of programme review, the panel were satisfied that the provider's institutional QA fully comprehend the programme submitted for revalidation. ATI has procedures for access, transfer and progression, which are discussed under Criterion 4 in this report.

A declaration accompanying the application for revalidation has been signed by Gillian Doherty, Chief Operations Officer. This declaration verifies the accuracy of the information provided, as well as providing an assurance that resources are in place to deliver the programme. The declaration further states that the proposed programme complies with applicable statutory, regulatory and professional body requirements.

Criterion 2

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

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

For each minor award specified, the minimum intended module learning outcomes to qualify for the award are consistent with relevant QQI minor awards standards.

Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment	
Yes		

Principal programme

The panel is satisfied that ATI's application meets this criterion. The programme aims and objectives are expressed clearly in the programme documentation presented by ATI. These make clear that the programme is industry led, and developed through stakeholder consultation to meet demand.

A QQI award is specified for those who complete the principal programme: *Advanced Certificate in Accounting QQI Level 6*. This award title is consistent with unit 3.1 of QQI's 2014 Policy and Criteria for Making Awards. The panel is of the view that the award title is appropriately informative to prospective learners and other stakeholders, and represents the programme clearly and accurately for this purpose.

The programme team have mapped the MIPLOs to the Professional Award Type Descriptors as required for apprenticeship programmes and also utilised an occupational profile. However, the panel held concerns following a review of the MIPLOs specified by ATI within the programme document that these were not clearly expressed, and not worded in a manner that would enable ATI to readily evidence their attainment through assessed student work. Therefore, the panel requested that ATI has submitted documentation, in which both the minimum intended programme learning outcomes (MIPLOs) and minimum intended module learning outcomes (MIMLOs) are explicitly specified. Following a review of ATI's revised MIPLOs the panel was satisfied that there is a rationale for the changes which reflects experience and feedback gained from delivery of the programme so far, and remains consistent with the QQI Professional Award descriptors for Level 6.

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.
- 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 evidence of learner demand for the programme.
 - (v) There is evidence of employment opportunities for graduates where relevant.
 - (vi) The programme meets genuine education and training needs.
- 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	

Principal programme

The panel is satisfied that ATI's application meets this criterion.

It is evident that the apprenticeship programme team have engaged in consultation with employers in the process of preparing the programme proposed for revalidation. There is evidence of strong learner demand for the programme, with 550 applicants in the first year of delivery and double that number the following year. A high percentage of apprentices graduating from the programme in 2019 have been offered continuing contracts by their existing employers (95%).

However, the panel held some concerns regarding the clarity of the MIPLOs as they were initially presented in the programme document. ATI was asked to revise the wording of the MIPLOs during an adjournment of the panel to ensure that their attainment could be clearly evidenced through assessed student work. ATI submitted satisfactory evidence of this revision to the panel.

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 satisfied.
- 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 (CEFR) 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
Yes	

Principal programme

The panel is satisfied that ATI's application meets this criterion. ATI includes eligibility criteria and procedures for entry to the programme within the apprenticeship QA manual. This information includes details on English language ability, employment status, prior educational attainment and criteria for establishing recognition of prior (experiential) learning where applicants do not have the requisite qualifications. Processes for the recruitment of apprentices as well as transfer and progression options are clearly identified.

Learners are provided with information at information sessions and in promotional materials. Current and prospective apprentices can additionally access information pertaining to Access, Transfer and Progression options within the Apprentice Handbook, programme brochures, the prospectus and on the website.

The panel is of the view that the programme title is unambiguous, will have long-lasting significance and is consistent with the purposes of the QQI award to which it leads. Further, it is learner focused and will be meaningful to prospective or enrolled learners.

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 principles.
- f) The curriculum is comprehensively and systematically documented.
- g) The credit allocated to the programme is consistent with the difference between the entry standard and minimum intended programme learning outcomes.
- h) The credit allocated to each module is consistent with the difference between the module entry standard and minimum intended module learning outcomes.
- i) Elements such as practice placement and work based phases are provided with the same rigour and attentiveness as other elements.
- j) The programme **duration** (expressed in terms of time from initial enrolment to completion) and its **fulltime equivalent contact time** (expressed in hours) are consistent with the difference between the minimum entry standard and award standard and with the credit allocation.

Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	

Principal programme

The panel is generally satisfied that ATI's application meets this criterion.

Notably, the track record of the programme prior to revalidation is an indicatively positive with regard to this criterion. ATI apprentices are performing above national averages on exams, and employer feedback is positive. It is clear to the panel that the curriculum is appropriately aligned to the skills profile, and that graduates of the programme would be in possession of appropriate technical and discipline specific knowledge, skills and competences.

However, the panel held some concerns regarding the mapping of the written curriculum to the MIPLOs, which are in turn mapped to the relevant Awards Standards. During the site visit, the panel raised some concerns with ATI representatives that within the module documentation, the MIMLOs were not clearly mapped to the programme MIPLOs ATI had presented. This was particularly the case in relation to MIPLOs that emphasized development of transversal or soft skills. Although the document frequently indicated alignment, this was not consistently reflected in the assessment strategies of those modules. For example, it was not evident to the panel how MIMLO 1 "*Explain the nature and purpose of management accounting, costing terms and concepts*" could be mapped to MIPLO 10 "*Take personal responsibility to evaluate and address self-development and training needs within structured and independent learning environments. Provide support and guidance to others in order to further professional development for self and others*" within the module 'Management Accounting'. Nor was it clear how evidence of achievement of achieving this outcome would be provided within the assessment strategy (a 100% proctored written examination). ATI were requested to review the MIPLOs and the overall mapping against these within the written curriculum during an adjournment of the panel.

In addition, the panel held some concerns regarding the labelling of Module 8 'Financial Data Management' as a capstone. The panel undertook discussions with ATI staff during the site visit on this point, and requested that ATI either remove the use of this term from the documentation and module descriptor, or otherwise comprehensively review the module structure to ensure it functioned as a capstone was intended to.

Following an adjournment, ATI provided evidence to the panel that it had addressed these concerns by revising its mapping of the MIPLOs to the MIMLOs throughout the documentation and removing the term capstone from the module documentation. The panel is of the view that ATI could usefully make clearer how they are intending to integrate learning into the Financial Data Management module, and reflect this more transparently in the module documentation.

Criterion 6

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

- a) The specification of the programme's staffing requirements (staff required as part of the programme and intrinsic to it) is precise, and rigorous and consistent with the programme and its defined purpose. The specifications include professional and educational qualifications, licences-to practise where applicable, experience and the staff/learner ratio requirements. See also criterion 12 c).
- b) The programme has an identified complement of staff (or potential staff) who are available, qualified and capable to provide the specified programme in the context of their existing commitments.
- c) The programme's complement of staff (or potential staff) (those who support learning including any employer-based personnel) are demonstrated to be competent to enable learners to achieve the intended programme learning outcomes and to assess learners' achievements as required.
- d) There are arrangements for the performance of the programme's staff to be managed to ensure continuing capability to fulfil their roles and there are staff development opportunities.
- e) There are arrangements for programme staff performance to be reviewed and there are mechanisms for encouraging development and for addressing underperformance.
- 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.

Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	

Principal programme

The panel is satisfied that ATI's application meets this criterion. ATI has specified programme staffing requirements in the programme documentation for the college, the coordinating provider and the employer.

QA processes are in place to ensure consistency of staffing across the multiple colleges. Colleges are required to appoint a full-time programme manager and submit staff credentials for sign off by ATI. Lecturers are required to hold qualifications appropriate to the subjects they teach, and ATI reviews the credentials of lecturers prior to approval, including details of professional memberships, technical qualifications and pedagogical qualifications/experience. During QA visits, ATI staff provide the induction for programme staff within the colleges.

Work-based Mentors must be qualified Accountants or Accounting Technicians with relevant work experience. They must additionally attend a mandatory ATI induction training specific to their role, and complete Continuing Professional Development activities.

Criterion 7

There are sufficient physical resources to implement the programme as planned

- a) The specification of the programme's physical resource requirements (physical resources required as part of the programme and intrinsic to it) is precise, and rigorous and consistent with the programme, its defined purpose and its resource/learner-ratio requirements. See also criterion 12 d).
- b) The programme has an identified complement of supported physical resources (or potential supported physical resources) that are available in the context of existing commitments on these e.g. availability of:
 - (i) suitable premises and accommodation for the learning and human needs (comfort, safety, health, wellbeing) of learners (this applies to all of the programme's learning environments including the workplace learning environment)
 - (ii) suitable information technology and resources (including educational technology and any virtual learning environments provided)
 - (iii) printed and electronic material (including software) for teaching, learning and assessment
 - (iv) suitable specialist equipment (e.g. kitchen, laboratory, workshop, studio) – if applicable
 - (v) technical support
 - (vi) administrative support
 - (vii) company placements/internships – if applicable
- c) If versions of the programme are provided in parallel at more than one location each independently meets the location-sensitive validation criteria for each location (for example staffing, resources and the learning environment).
- d) There is a five-year plan for the programme. It should address
 - (i) Planned intake (first five years) and
 - (ii) The total costs and income over the five years based on the planned intake.
- e) The programme includes controls to ensure entitlement to use the property (including intellectual property, premises, materials and equipment) required.

Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	

Principal programme

The panel is satisfied that ATI's application meets this criterion. The programme's physical resource requirements are specified within the document, and these are stipulated by ATI within its Approved Partner Programme and Conditions of Recognition. Colleges must at a minimum provide for learning and human needs, have lecture rooms of appropriate size, premises and facilities appropriate to the course offered and its delivery mode, and suitable IT, technical and administrative support. ATI notes within its programme document that colleges will provide learners access to library services and software required for the programme.

At induction, apprentices are issued with subject textbooks and given access to MyRevision, which allows them to generate and answer questions on programme topics, receiving feedback. Apprentices also have access to online tutorials through KnowledgePoint.

A five year plan projecting growth by 10% year on year is included in the documentation. A plan includes costs and income was additionally submitted to the panel to satisfy sub criterion d) in full.

Criterion 8

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

- a) The programme's physical, social, cultural and intellectual environment (recognising that the environment may, for example, be partly virtual or involve the workplace) including resources and support systems are consistent with the intended programme learning outcomes.
- b) Learners can interact with, and are supported by, others in the programme's learning environments including peer learners, teachers, and where applicable supervisors, practitioners and mentors.
- c) The programme includes arrangements to ensure that the parts of the programme that occur in the workplace are subject to the same rigours as any other part of the programme while having regard to the different nature of the workplace.

Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	

Principal programme

The panel is satisfied that ATI's application meets this criterion. Learners within the apprenticeship programme are supported by work-based mentors during the 4 days per week spent on-the-job. These mentors are approved and inducted by ATI, and must meet minimum qualification requirements as well as undertaking Continuing Professional Development. During the site visit, employer representatives noted that the induction is streamlined and highly relevant to what apprentices are learning during their time on the job. College programme managers visit apprentices in the workplace, and liaise with both work-based mentors and ATI's apprenticeship programme manager. ATI has QA processes in place to ensure there is consistency of the learning environment across the multiple colleges. Colleges must demonstrate in their application to ATI that they meet ATI's compliance criteria. While attending classes for the off-the-job component of the programme, learners are able to access the facilities of the college they attend. These include IT, administrative and technical supports as well as learner support services.

During the site visit, the panel explored the extent to which learners were able to interact with peers and engage with a community of fellow learners while undertaking the apprenticeship. ATI representatives acknowledged that as learners were employed and working 4 days per week this aspect of the apprenticeship did not mirror what would occur in a full-time on campus course. However, both ATI staff and representatives of the colleges who were present noted that peer interaction and support was fostered during induction, encouraged by the relatively small class sizes. Discussion is formally facilitated by an online forum provided in Moodle, and observed by college staff to be supplemented by informal mechanisms managed by the learners themselves, such as *whatsApp* groups.

Criterion 9

There are sound teaching and learning strategies

- a) The teaching strategies support achievement of the intended programme/module learning outcomes.
- b) The programme provides authentic learning opportunities to enable learners to achieve the intended programme learning outcomes.
- c) The programme enables enrolled learners to attain (if reasonably diligent) the minimum intended programme learning outcomes reliably and efficiently (in terms of overall learner effort and a reasonably balanced workload).
- d) Learning is monitored/supervised.
- e) Individualised guidance, support and timely formative feedback is regularly provided to enrolled learners as they progress within the programme.

Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	

Principal programme

The panel is satisfied that ATI's application meets this criterion. Within the programme document, ATI presents a teaching and learning strategy that includes formative assessment. This encompasses the desirable attributes of an ATI graduate, and the key principles that underpin teaching and learning on the programme. These pertain to the relevance of programme content, the appropriate use of technology, the availability of Blended Learning mode, the impact of formative assessment and the importance of feedback from learners, tutors, examiners and workplace mentors in informing continuous improvement. Although some specific detail is provided in this section, for example, that learners can use MyRevision software to receive formative feedback on their performance on sample exam questions, the panel observed that the strategy is largely descriptive/generic. A recommendation made by the panel is that ATI should continue to develop its teaching and learning strategy documents to include further examples of how the aims of the strategy will be realised in practice within the programme delivery to enhance this section of its programme document.

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*
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	

Principal programme

The panel is satisfied that ATI's application meets this criterion. ATI's programme documentation includes a programme assessment strategy, and the panel was additionally provided with sample assessments for review. ATI's integration of work-based tasks to the programme assessment strategy is a positive step. The 30% weighting these are given within the module grading structure will motivate learners and give appropriate recognition to the volume of work involved and the intrinsic value of the tasks. Workplace mentors are aware of the criteria for workplace assessments. Mentors sign off on the tasks, which are uploaded to Moodle, and then graded by ATI appointed assessors. The panel notes that these tasks are well-placed to facilitate learner achievement of programme learning outcomes that emphasize transversal and soft skills development.

ATI has processes in place to ensure fair and consistent assessment of enrolled learners within its institutional QA. However, during the site visit, the panel identified a gap in the documentation pertaining to the work-based assessment tasks that have been integrated to the apprenticeship's assessment strategy as an outcome of the programmatic review. ATI was requested by the panel to update Section 6 of its QA Manual (Assessment of Apprentice Achievement) to represent the QA processes that would facilitate this change, including those for internal and external moderation of work-based learning assessments. Evidence that this change had been made was submitted to the panel following an adjournment.

The panel was additionally of the view that ATI needed to provide an explicit statement of where each MIPLO is assessed, rather than mapping a relatively wide array of MIMLOs to each MIPLO. The Panel therefore advised ATI during the site visit and in its interim report that its initial mapping had overrepresented transversal/soft skills across the programme, and that it is sufficient that a MIPLO relating to such a skill is achieved and evidenced in only one or two modules. This was addressed satisfactorily.

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 disabilities.
- i) If the programme aims to enrol international students it complies with the *Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes to International Students* and there are appropriate in-service supports in areas such as English language, learning skills, information technology skills and such like, to address the particular needs of international learners and enable such learners to successfully participate in the programme.
- j) The programme's learners will be well cared for and safe while participating in the programme, (e.g. while at the provider's premises or those of any collaborators involved in provision, the programme's locations of provision including any workplace locations or practice-placement locations).

Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	

Principal programme

The panel is satisfied that ATI's application meets this criterion. At the outset of the apprenticeship, learners are provided with an induction. Within this learners are informed regarding access to counselling services, additional learning supports and reasonable accommodations. Handbooks are provided to all apprentices, and online resources are also made available to guide submission of workplace tasks.

ATI monitors the engagement of colleges with apprentices via feedback mechanisms such as surveys and through the college QA mechanisms, which include site visits by members of the ATI apprenticeship management team. The student voice is also captured via a regular student forum which entails meetings with student representatives. Survey data is captured in a manner that enables ATI to distinguish responses by college.

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-the-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 assurance is intrinsic to the programme's maintenance arrangements and addresses all aspects highlighted by the validation criteria.
- f) The programme-specific quality assurance arrangements are consistent with QQI's statutory QA guidelines and use continually monitored completion rates and other sources of information that may provide insight into the quality and standards achieved.
- g) The programme operation and management arrangements are coherently documented and suitable.
- h) There are sound procedures for interface with QQI certification.

Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	

Principal programme

The panel is satisfied that the provider's application meets this criterion. ATI has established QA procedures in place for approving and monitoring colleges engaged in delivery of the programme. Governance of the programme is provided by the Consortium Steering Group, and a Programme Board provides advice on the ongoing development of the programme. As the coordinating provider, ATI employs a management team for the programme, including an Apprenticeship Director, an Apprenticeship Manager, a work-based Assessment Executive and a Recruitment Executive. Cross-functional support is provided to the apprenticeship programme by ATI in areas including QA, Marketing, IT, Finance and Business Development.

During the site visit, the panel queried whether current management processes were scalable. ATI confirmed that resources have been allocated for an additional staff member (an Apprenticeship Executive) to be appointed in 2020 in anticipation of the further growth of the programme, and that a review of data management processes was also underway to maximise efficiencies moving forward.

Programme specific criteria pertaining to coordination with the colleges where the programme is delivered is included in the documentation. This makes provision for ATI to have oversight of staffing, learner support and physical resources. At the time of the site visit a gap was identified by the panel in relation to QA of work-based assessment (discussed under Criterion 10 in this report). This was appropriately addressed by ATI during an adjournment of the panel.

Overall recommendation to QQI

Principal programme

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

Summary of recommended special conditions of validation

There are no special conditions of validation.

Summary of recommendations to the provider

The panel strongly recommends that ATI:

1. Provide further documentation in the module descriptor indicating the development and implementation of the integrative nature of the new module in Financial Data Management. (Criterion 5)
2. Continue to develop the documentation of its teaching and learning strategy (see Criterion 10) to provide further examples of how the aims of the strategy will be realised in practice within the programme delivery, particularly in relation to work-based learning and assessment.
3. Continue to develop the work-based learning tasks as a basis for assessment, as the distinguishing feature of the apprenticeship programme and as a means of further evidencing the transversal and soft-skills-related MIPLOs.
4. Provide a table specifying an assessment that is closely relevant to each MIPLO (rather than mapping multiple modules against each MIPLO)
5. Specify in the Quality Manual or supporting guidance what approach is taken to grading work-based assessment when incorporated in summative assessment in future.

Declarations of Evaluators' Interests


No interests have been declared by members of the revalidation panel that would affect the impartiality of the panel and its ability to make a recommendation to QQI regarding the revalidation of the primary programme and the two embedded programmes.

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

Panel chairperson: Jack O'Herlihy

Date: 13th March 2020

Signed:



13/03/2020

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