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

Part 1.   Provider details

Provider name	Carlow College, St Patrick's
Date of site visit	13th December 2021
Date of report	7th January 2022

Section A.   Overall recommendations

Principal programme	Title	BA (Hons) in Psychology
	Award	Bachelor of Arts
	Credit	180
	Recommendation *Satisfactory OR Satisfactory subject to proposed conditions OR Not Satisfactory*	Satisfactory subject to proposed conditions

Section B.

Name	Role	Affiliation
Dr Conor McGuckin	Chair	Associate Professor, Educational Psychology, Trinity College Dublin
Dr April Hargreaves	Subject Matter Expert	Programme Director for Psychology in National College Ireland
Mary Jennings	Secretary	Independent Consultant
Rachel McCauley	Learner Representative	BSc in Applied Psychology and MSc in Health Psychology NUI Galway, current PhD candidate at Trinity College
Sean Harty	Industry Representative	Chairperson of Addiction Counsellors of Ireland

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)*
Carlow College, St Patrick's campus	40	Not clear, see note below

Proposed Duration and Enrolment					
	First Intake Date	**Duration**	**Intakes per Annum**	**Enrolment i.e., learners per Intake**	
			Maximum	**Minimum**	**Maximum**
Full-Time	September 2022	3 years	1	10 (year 1) 15 (years 2-5)	15 (year 1) 20 (year 2) 30 (years 3&4) 40 (year 5)
Part-Time					

Panel Commentary on proposed enrolment:

It was not clear to the panel on the exact numbers of proposed-part-time learners to be enrolled on the programme and set the following condition.

Condition

It is a condition that the projected enrolment of part-time students is confirmed in the documentation. See Criterion 4 below.

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

A core goal of the programme is to provide a programme of study eventually seeking validation from the Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI) that, as a result, enables graduates to pursue professional careers in psychology following postgraduate study. Beyond providing a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the core disciplines within Psychology, this programme meets the following education and training needs:

- A programme of study with a focus on education and learning, leading to a nationally and internationally, recognised QQI level 8 award.
- An *ab initio* level 8 award for school leavers, international learners, mature learners and graduates wishing to change career paths, all of whom have a desire to apply an understanding of Psychology in their career.
- Opportunities for graduates of QQI level 5 and 6 ECEC programmes who wish, through RPL, to pursue degree level education.
- Opportunities for RPL for workers in a range of education and care settings.
- Possibility of further postgraduate study and training.

Target learner groups
School-leavers i.e., those who apply through the CAO system who wish to achieve a Psychology Degree and/or become a professional psychologist (after postgraduate study) is the category that will likely account for approximately 80% of all enrolled learners as the demand for full time Psychology programmes via the CAO route is significant. Mature learners who are returning to education - some learners wishing to access this programme may have already worked in related fields and be seeking to further their employment opportunities with a Psychology degree. This category will likely account for approximately 20% of all enrolled learners based on our experience of delivering other programmes on both full time and part time basis. International learners – increasingly, Carlow College is seeing applications from international learners who want to study full degree programmes in Ireland. As Psychology is a universally popular subject to study at undergraduate level, we anticipate some demand from our international applicants.

Approved countries for provision	Ireland
Delivery mode: Full-time/Part-time	Full-time/part-time

The teaching and learning modalities
Direct contact via lectures, tutorials, seminars and problem-based learning.

Summary of specifications for teaching staff		
Role	**Profile (Qualifications and Experience expected)**	**No. (WTEs) of Staff on the programme with this role and profile**
Programme Director	Programme Director must have a minimum level 10 qualification within the discipline of Psychology (the Programme Director may be appointed from any member of staff with the minimum level 10 qualification)	0.4
Lecturer	Lecturers must have a minimum level 10 qualification within the discipline of Psychology, along with extensive practice and research experience and an awareness of research methods.	5.5
Tutor	Tutors must have a minimum level 9 qualification within the discipline of Psychology and have experience in practice and competency in teaching general psychology.	0.5

Methodology / Learning Activity	Description	Staff to Learner Ratio e.g., 1:12
Presentations that are both group and individual based	Communication/performance/time management	1:40
Essay/Exam	Demonstration of knowledge /thinking Presenting on critically developing an argument	1:40
Reflection	Problem solving/ self-development/self- directed/judgement	1:20 for tutorials
MCQ	Demonstration of knowledge/ recall/ recount	1:40
Project design	Design/produce/create/perform	1:40 and 1:20 depending on lecture/tutorial
Group work	Problem solving/ cooperation/teamwork/ time management/ carry out instructions	1:40 and 1:20 depending on lecture/tutorial
Poster	Visual and technical skills/synthesis of information/ communication	1:40
Research/Dissertation	Identify problems/analysis of data/ plan/apply information	1:1 across a small group of learners
Literature review	Information search/investigate/ interpret/ review	1:1 across a small group of learners

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.[1]

Programme	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
BA (Hons) in Psychology	Yes	As an established provider of higher education programmes Carlow College, St Patrick's has met the prerequisites (section 44(7) of the 2012 Act) to apply for validation of this programme. It was noted that that the College has in place procedures for access, transfer and progression. Carlow College, St Patrick's provided the panel with a copy of the letter to be submitted to QQI with the application for the validation of the programmes. The letter contained the signature and declaration required under this criterion.

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[1] This criterion is to ensure the programme can actually be provided and will not be halted on account of breach of the law. The declaration is sought to ensure this is not overlooked but QQI is not responsible for verifying this declaration of enforcing such requirements.

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.[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.

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]

Programme	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
BA (Hons) in Psychology	Yes	The panel found that the aims, objectives, and rationale for the programme were clearly expressed. It concluded that the programme and module learning outcomes have been clearly outlined and were appropriate to the level of the award. The title of the programme was deemed to be appropriate and in line with the QQI standard for the Major Award Type on the NFQ. It was noted that the minimum intended programme learning outcomes for the BA (Hons) in Psychology were informed by the QQI General Award Standards for Higher Education and Training and have been mapped against these standards. The panel is satisfied with this criterion has been met.

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[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.

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 evidence[5] of learner demand for the programme.
   (v) There is evidence of employment opportunities for graduates where relevant[6].
   (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.

Programme	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
BA (Hons) in Psychology	Yes	The panel is satisfied that the intended programme had taken account of the views of stakeholders, including potential employers, learners and graduates and the requirements of professional bodies such as the Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI). The panel was informed that Carlow College, St Patrick's had been teaching psychology as a subject in several of its programmes since the 1980s. It noted that interest in the subject by learners enrolled in the College had grown steadily over recent years. It was said that the College received many queries at events such as student career fairs for a stand-alone programme in psychology. The team also informed the panel that the psychology degree offered by WIT, which is in the same South East region, was oversubscribed,

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[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.

		indicating that demand had not been satisfied for this type of programme.
		It was stated that this evidence indicated support for a standalone programme in psychology. As part of its own strategic development, a proposal was made to the Strategic Planning Committee of the College who supported the development of the programme now under review. This includes a commitment to provide sufficient resources to implement the programme effectively. The proposed programme has been under continuous review and development since 2015. The panel was informed that the programme furthers the College's overall educational vision to be a local and regional centre in the southeast for Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences. The programme is aligned to objectives in the College's Graduate Attributes, Strategic Plan 2017- 2022 and its Academic Framework which emphasise the need for graduates to have access to labour markets.
		It was stated that the BA (Honours) in Psychology will open up a variety of career paths, some requiring further study and experience, such as working in clinical, healthcare, probation or educational settings. Evidence cited at the review included the working relationship the College has with the local courts' services for instance, with service staff indicating the need for the expertise in psychology. Further evidence cited was the reported progression of College graduates, who had taken psychology as a subject, taking further study in the discipline at postgraduate level.
		The panel noted that Carlow College St Patrick's had consulted the requirements for accreditation by the Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI) in the design of the overall programme. The criterion has been met

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

a) The information about the programme as well as its procedures for access, transfer and progression are consistent with the procedures described in QQI's policy and criteria for access, transfer and progression in relation to learners for providers of further and higher education and training. Each of its programme-specific criteria is individually and explicitly satisfied[8].

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 (CEFRL[9]) 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.

Programme	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
BA (Hons) in Psychology	Partially	The panel is generally satisfied that the programme's access, transfer, and progression arrangements with clarification needs on the number of proposed part-time learners to be enrolled. Information on access, transfer and progression is available through the Carlow College, St Patrick's website, in promotional material and in the draft Student Handbooks provided to the panel. It was not clear to the panel on the exact numbers of proposed part-time learners to be enrolled on the programme as part of the implementation of the programme and set the following condition.

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[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)

		Condition
		It is a condition that the projected enrolment of part-time students is confirmed in the documentation.

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[10].

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.[11]

Programme	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
BA (Hons) in Psychology	Partially	As noted, the proposed programme has been designed as a stand-alone degree in psychology. In general, the panel is satisfied that the curriculum is well-structured and fit for purpose but has made some specific recommendations for consideration by the College in the light of the findings below. It was noted that some modules are cross-listed with other programmes, such as social care and programmes in the arts and humanities. The panel was advised that this approach was both practical from a utilisation of staff resources, but also was beneficial in creating a sense of community within the College, where learners were facilitated to bring different life experiences and perspectives to bear on a variety of topics. This approach was also in alignment with the policy and practice of interdisciplinary collaboration within the College. The panel did note that the programme structure was designed to ensure that the core aspects of psychology are covered across the three Stages

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[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

(e.g., Biological Basis of Behaviour, Child Developmental Psychology, Cognitive Psychology, Social Psychology, Individual Differences in Psychology and Research Methods). The design team informed the panel that considerable research and consultation with professional bodies and external advisors had gone into the development of the proposed programme to ensure that it was fit for purpose as a programme developing graduates seeking to work professionally as psychologists with a clear identity as such.

The panel made the observation that many of the modules carry 5 credits but was of the view that, in some cases, the amount of content to be covered, and consequent assessments required, might be more reflective of modules bearing 10 credits. The panel suggested that consideration might be given to having more of a concentration on the core subjects, particularly providing more opportunities to undertake study and practical work on research methods and analysis for instance. There might be less emphasis on applied or more specialised subjects such as educational psychology or work and organisational psychology; the programme is not in applied psychology but concerned with the basic principles and foundational aspects of the science.
It was further observed by the panel that, in some cases, there was overlap in the content of some modules, e.g., the topic of adolescence is covered in at least two of the modules and this might be looked at again.

The panel advised that further consideration be given to the order of modules over the 3 stages. For instance, it was suggested that the topic of the Biological Basis of Behaviour, to be covered in Stage 1, might be moved to a later stage, as it was felt that learners can find this topic difficult.
See further comment in Criterion 9 and 10 below in relation to teaching and learning and assessment strategies.
In summary, the following recommendations on the modules content and structure were made by the panel:
Recommendation
It is recommended that in terms of modules the following be considered:

		1. **Check the chronological presentation of modules** 2. **Check for duplication of content across modules** 3. **Explore if more space can be created in the curriculum for research (methodology and analysis)** 4. **Explore if some applied modules could be amalgamated or removed** It was noted that, in the documentation provided, no content was provided for the module on Personality Psychology and that the information on module assessment was duplicated. The panel set the following condition in this regard. **Condition** **It is a condition that the documentation for the module for Personality Psychology be edited to include the module content and remove the repetition in terms of module assessment.**

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[12] (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[13] opportunities[14].
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.

Programme	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
BA (Hons) in Psychology	Yes	In general, the panel is satisfied that sufficient consideration has been given to the staffing requirements for the proposed programme. It was noted that a new staff member with a PHD in Psychology had recently been appointed to enhance the existing cohort of staff. It was further noted that a firm commitment to provide sufficient staff to implement the programme as planned had been given by the senior management team in Carlow College, St Patrick's. The panel welcomed this commitment. The panel was informed that, in line with its overall policy in relation to allocation of staff time between teaching, administration and research, the College provided specific time for staff to undertake research. The allocated time for research was agreed with individual staff at performance reviews and varied accordingly. The panel advised that it would be

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[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.

		important to support the staff on the programme to be research active: not only was this a requirement of PSI, but it modelled best practice for learners and provided opportunities for them to be involved in research as appropriate.
		Recommendation
		It is recommended that consideration be given to support staff to be research active.
		The panel was informed that there were sufficient staff to provide support for learners using the laboratory services as part of their studies. It was further stated that, as learners enrolled on the programme increase, Carlow College St Patrick's was committed to increasing staffing requirements, including staffing for services such as the laboratory, library or student services. The panel made the following recommendation in relation to having a dedicated technician available to the proposed programme. The panel advised that would enhance the overall learner experience and would also strengthen any application to PSI for accreditation of the programme. See also Criterion 7 below.
		Recommendation
		It is recommended that the staffing plan reflect the requirement of PSI, e.g., appointment of a dedicated technician.
		The panel is satisfied that the criterion has been met.

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.

Programme	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
BA (Hons) Psychology	Yes	In general, the panel is satisfied that there are sufficient physical resources to implement the programme as planned. At the virtual review, the team clarified that any learner who requires assistance to have access to necessary equipment such as laptops and licensed software, is provided with the appropriate resources. The panel was informed that, as Carlow College, St Patrick's fell outside government-sponsored schemes providing financial assistance to learners, the College provided assistance from their own financial resources for this purpose. It was stated that this was in keeping with the College's long-standing ethos and policy of ensuring access to learners from less advantaged socio-economic groups to higher education. It was acknowledged that, as the proposed programme is a new one, and the numbers enrolling are likely to grow incrementally, further investment in resources such as laboratory space or additional resources for the library will be required. The senior management team stated that an additional budget had already been allocated for this purpose and that there was ample

		campus space available to create further facilities as needed. The panel advised that it would be important that all necessary facilities would be available to all learners right from the start of the programme and recommended that further consideration be given to achieving this objective in the resources planning process. This included, as noted in Criterion 6 above, the allocation of a dedicated laboratory technician to support the programme **Recommendation** **It is recommended that, in terms of resourcing, learners would have immediate access to the resources required for successful participation and completion of the programme, e.g., computing facilities, including data collection software, library resources and resources for practical aspects of the modules.**

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

<table>
<tr><td colspan="3">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.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Programme</td><td>Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)</td><td>Comment</td></tr>
<tr><td>BA (Hons) in Psychology</td><td>Partially</td><td>In general, the panel is satisfied that the learning environment is consistent with the needs of the learners but has set a condition that needs to be satisfied in order to fully meet this criterion.
It was stated that, as a relatively small college, Carlow College St Patrick's provides many opportunities for learners to interact with their peers, teachers and supervisors. There are, for example, modules in the proposed programme that are cross-listed with other programmes, providing opportunities for learner interaction. It was stated that, for instance, faculty members are allocated time for supervision of learners undertaking dissertations and are guided throughout the research process.
In discussion with the team at the review, it was acknowledged that the opportunity for learners to interact with their peers was an important principle. There is a distinction to be made between psychology as a subject within programmes and the professional development of a professional psychologist which has ethics and professionalism as central issues. The panel considered that it was not clearly outlined how the cohort of learners for a stand-alone psychology programme might develop a professional identity as a psychologist and that this topic be further considered by the College. In this regard, the panel recommended that it might be useful to consider a congregated approach to the listing of modules for this programme as it would assist in the overall development of a strong, specific identity for the learner as a psychologist. See also Criterion 5 above.
Recommendation
It is recommended that the issue of cross-listing of modules versus a congregated approach should be considered for this new learner cohort.

Recommendation</td></tr>
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		It is recommended that the programme clearly identifies how learners will develop a professional identity and understand the central issues of ethics and professionalism as a psychologist.
		There are a range of learner supports available as part of the College's strategy for learner retention, with a policy of open access for learners to faculty and administrative staff. See also Criterion 11 below for further comment.
		The panel noted that there was a workload of 15 assessments to be completed within a 12-week semester and is of the view that this might be a challenging workload for learners. The panel made the following recommendation in relation to the workload proposed. See also Criterion 10 below for comment.
		Recommendation **It is recommended that the programmes explore the schedule of assessments in terms of student workload.** It was noted that, in the documentation, the suggested workload for learners was stated to be 125 per week. It was clarified at the review meeting that this was a clerical error and would be corrected in the final document.
		Condition **It is a condition that the Programme Document be edited to accurately reflect the suggested learner workload per week.**

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, support15 and timely formative feedback is regularly provided to enrolled learners as they progress within the programme.

Programme	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
BA (Hons) in Psychology	Yes	In general, the panel is satisfied that there are sound teaching and learning strategies in place. In dialogue at the review, the panel and team discussed the importance of having an emphasis on learners developing competency in the core elements of the curriculum, with perhaps less time allocated to applied psychology. For instance, the panel indicated the need to emphasise the importance of teaching research methods from the outset as the ability to conduct, as well as to analyse research was a core competency for professional psychologists. At the same time, the panel welcomed the inclusion of contemporary issues such as Gender and Sexuality in the curriculum, alongside more traditional topics. The panel considered it would be beneficial for the team to consider how the principles and philosophy of Universal Design for Learning might be incorporated into the overall strategy. It noted, for instance, that there was reference to facilitating different 'learning styles', rather than having a method of teaching and learning based on a universal approach and made the following recommendation. **Recommendation** **It is recommended that, in relation to teaching and learning, the programme team explore creative and imaginative approaches that can demonstrate the contemporary knowledge of the programme team and institution (e.g., application of Universal Design and the philosophy and principles of Universal Design for Learning).** See Criterion 5 and Criterion 10 for further discussion.

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[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.

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*[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]

Programme	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
BA (Hons) in Psychology	Yes	It was stated at the review session that the design team is continually reviewing the type, amount and sequencing of the assessments required by learners. The team had also taken into account the requirements stipulated by the professional body, PSI, on this topic. Some new types of assessment had been introduced such as submission of podcasts as part of assignment complete on and the incorporation of assessment based on e-learning assignments. The panel emphasised the importance of providing multiple modes for learners to demonstrate their learning, through presentations, joint projects etc as well as the more traditional exam and essay assessments. It was acknowledged that there was always a risk of over-assessment and the team indicated that this was kept in mind when devising assessments; the panel considered that it would be important to keep this under review. As noted in Criterion 8, the schedule of assessments might be reconsidered in some instances so that not so many are required over a short time span. See also Criterion 9 on this topic.

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[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).

		Recommendations
		It is recommended that in relation to assessment that the programme team explore alternative approaches to the assessment of learner knowledge.
		It is recommended that consideration be given to the degree to which modules are assessed so as not to overburden the student workload.

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[20].
i) If the programme aims to enrol international students it complies with the *Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes to International Students*[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.
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).

Programme	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
BA (Hons) in Psychology	Yes	The panel was informed that there is a strong ethos of care, coupled with a strategy for inclusion that applies to individual learners within the College, many of whom may be coming back to education after a long time. There was a focus on retention and ensuring that learners got every opportunity to complete their chosen programme. It was stated that this involves providing a range of services from learner supports, including, for instance, providing flexibility in when assessments are to be completed for a cohort of mature learners who may have family responsibilities that need to be prioritised; providing needs-based support with assistive technology for learners with mobility or visual impairment by drawing on funds available from the European Social Fund (ESF) and collaborating with organisations and agencies in the disability sector to draw further support as needed for individuals.

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[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)

| | | The College has a free counselling service for learners who may require this service.

As the College has a relatively small number of learners overall, it was stated that, in general, each individual is known to the staff and faculty personally and this is an important factor in ensuring that learners get an integrated support service.
It was stated that the College regularly conducts surveys with learners to explore their needs and preferences. In a recent survey, a high number of respondents expressed a preference for a blended learning approach as this suited those with child care requirements for instance; this is currently being explored by the College at an institutional level, the panel was informed. It was noted that the programme under review for validation is based on in-person attendance.

Commendation
The panel commends Carlow College, St Patrick's for the personal care and attention shown to the needs of its learners and the clear evidence of the suite of supports that are in place to ensure learners are well-informed, guided and cared for. |
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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[22] 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.

Programme	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
BA (Hons) in Psychology	Yes	The panel is satisfied that there are effective structures in place for the governance and management of the programme under review. The QAH contains the governance structures for the College and procedures for access, transfer and progression, learner assessments and supports, and teaching and learning. It was noted that the QAH and associated policies and procedures have been developed in line with QQI statutory guidelines. The criterion has been met.

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[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. The programme meets the criterion subject to conditions set.

Commendations
1. The panel commends Carlow College, St Patrick's for the personal care and attention shown to the needs of its learners and the clear evidence of the suite of supports that are in place to ensure learners are well-informed, guided and cared for.

Special Conditions of Validation (directive and with timescale for compliance)
1. It is a condition that the projected enrolment of part-time students is confirmed in the documentation.
2. It is a condition that the documentation for the module for Personality Psychology be edited to include the module content and remove the repetition in terms of module assessment.
3. It is a condition that the Programme Document be edited to accurately reflect the suggested learner workload per week.

Summary of recommendations to the provider

1. It is recommended that in terms of modules the following be considered:
   - Check the chronological presentation of modules
   - Check for duplication of content across modules
   - Explore if more space can be created in the curriculum for research (methodology and analysis)
   - Explore if some applied modules could be amalgamated or removed
2. It is recommended that consideration be given to support staff to be research active.
3. It is recommended that the staffing plan reflect the requirement of PSI, e.g., appointment of a dedicated technician.
4. It is recommended that, in terms of resourcing, learners would have immediate access to the resources required for successful participation and completion of the programme, e.g., computing facilities, including data collection software, library resources and resources for practical aspects of the modules.
5. It is recommended that the issue of cross-listing of modules versus a congregated approach should be considered for this new learner cohort.
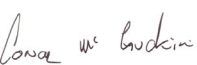
6. It is recommended that the programme clearly identifies how learners will develop a professional identity and understand the central issues of ethics and professionalism as a psychologist.
7. It is recommended that the programmes explore the schedule of assessments in terms of student workload**.**
8. It is recommended that, in relation to teaching and learning, the programme team explore creative and imaginative approaches that can demonstrate the contemporary knowledge of the programme team and institution (e.g., application of Universal Design and the philosophy and principles of Universal Design for Learning).
9. It is recommended that, in relation to assessment, the programme team explore alternative approaches to the assessment of learner knowledge.
10. It is recommended that consideration be given to the degree to which modules are assessed so as not to overburden the student workload.

Declarations of Evaluators' Interests

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

Panel chairperson: Conor Mc Guckin   Date: 7th January, 2022

Signed:

3.2 Disclaimer

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